

Israel resumes house demolitions

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Israeli army on Friday began knocking down Palestinian houses which it says were built illegally in West Bank areas still controlled by the Jewish state, a military spokesman said. A house near the autonomous West Bank town of Jenin was demolished along with several buildings belonging to Palestinian farmers in the Jordan Valley region east of Nablus. The army also destroyed some terraced fields in the Hebron region. The spate of demolitions was suspended during the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on the Hebron accord which was sealed last week after months of stalemate. The Israeli army has so far demolished more than 700 buildings which it says were built without correct permission.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تلغز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية «الراي»

Shraideh laid to rest in hometown

Deir Abi Said (Petra) — Depuising for His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan King attended the funeral procession of the late Abdullah Kleib Shraideh, whose body was laid to rest on Friday at his hometown of Deir Abi Said after Friday prayer. The late Shraideh, a former Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, former minister of state and senator, passed away on Wednesday at the age of 120. Prime Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabarti and Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Sa'd Hayel Shour mourned his death on Wednesday. After attending the prayers and the burial ceremony, Prince Hassan offered condolences to the Shraideh tribes, noting his services to his country and people, and describing him as one of the first generation pioneers of Jordan. Also attending the funeral were Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, Speaker of the Upper House of Parliament Ahmad Al Lawzi, cabinet ministers, senators, deputies and tribal governors.

Volume 22 Number 6437

AMMAN SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 1997, RAMADAN 16, 1417

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Palestinians mark Hebron massacre

Relatives of Baruch Goldstein's victims demand settlers' eviction from tense town

HEBRON (Agencies) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat came to Hebron Friday to hold his first cabinet meeting in the newly Palestinian-ruled city while residents marked the third anniversary of the murder by a Jewish settler of at least 30 worshippers in Ibrahimi Mosque.

Mr. Arafat flew in by helicopter from his Gaza City headquarters for his second visit since Israeli troops withdrew from about 80 per cent of the city a week ago.

His first visit on Sunday was greeted by tens of thousands of cheering Palestinians, but Friday's arrival was more low key.

After landing, Mr. Arafat lit a torch in front of the new headquarters of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) symbolising the new era which has come to the last main West Bank town to have been under full Israeli occupation. About 200 people gathered amid heavy security to welcome their president.

In addition to ministers in Mr. Arafat's self-ruled cabinet, Friday night's meeting was to involve members of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Palestinian officials said.

Mr. Arafat's visit coincided with ceremonies marking the third anniversary of the 1994 massacre at the Ibrahimi Mosque, a sacred site for both Muslims and Jews.

About 150 relatives of those killed in the massacre met in a hotel next to City Hall where there were new calls for Jewish settlers who still live under heavy Israeli army guard in the city center to leave.

"As long as the settlers are still here, there can still be massacres," said Aref Abu

Hadi, whose 12-year-old son Gabor was among those killed at the mosque.

Referring to a Jan. 1 shooting spree by an off-duty Israeli soldier which wounded six Palestinians in Hebron's market, he added: "We saw 15 days ago what can happen, and it will happen again unless they leave."

After prayers, dozens of Palestinians marched to the nearby Jewish settler enclave of Avraham Avinu. A few Israeli soldiers tried to push back the crowd. "Every day, you make new laws," Hashem Atrash, 37, yelled at the soldiers. "We don't want settlers here. We don't like them. They don't like us."

Eventually, the marchers turned back.

The confrontation took place in the spot where last Friday, just hours after Israel's troop withdrawal from most of Hebron, Palestinians had thrown stones and potatoes at Israeli soldiers.

Ahead of Friday prayers, Israeli troops searched worshippers entering the mosque, and just before noon closed the gates when it became apparent they could not check everyone in time. Soldiers pushed back Palestinians trying to force their way into the shrine.

Nearly 2,000 Muslims remained outside and started rolling out prayer mats in the courtyard of the fortress-like shrine. More straw mats as well as buckets with water for the ritual washing of hands were passed from inside to those outside.

Worshippers were angry. Mahmoud Abdul Khalek, 50, from the northern West Bank town of Jenin, said he had driven for 150 kilometres just to pray at the mosque.

"They broke my heart," Mr. Abdul Khalek said of the soldiers who kept him from the site.

"Hebron was liberated and I thought I could go inside and pray freely," said the Arabic teacher. "I also wanted to remember the massacre. It is a crime we should remember."

In a memorial ceremony Friday, the head of the Islamic court in Hebron gave decorative wall plates with a picture of the mosque and the name of each victim to the families of those killed in 1994.

Adnan Abu Sneineh, who lost his 14-year-old son Tareq in the massacre, said he would not rest until the settlers left Hebron. "I believe there will be no peace in this city," he said.

Also Friday six Israeli descendants of 67 Jews killed in riots in Hebron in 1929 met here with Palestinian security chief Jibril Rajoub to discuss ways of improving relations between Palestinians and Jews.

The six, led by a well-known leftwing militant Haim Hanegbi, congratulated Colonel Rajoub for the "liberation of Hebron" from Israeli rule and proposed the establishment of a museum in the city tracing the history of "Jewish-Arab cooperation," participants said.

Hebron's Jewish settlers constantly hark back to the 1929 riots to justify their complaints that Israel's recent withdrawal from most of Hebron has left them open to attacks by Palestinian radicals.

Hebron's Palestinians for their part say the Goldstein massacre demonstrates the threat represented by the continuing presence here of Jewish zealots.



INNOCENT VICTIMS: The wife and daughter of a man killed in a bomb explosion in Algeria mourn the loss. At least 200 people were reportedly killed in a series of bomb blasts blamed on anti-government guerrillas in Algeria last week in a stepped-up campaign of ruthless violence (see page 5) (AFP photo)

Israel sends signals of possible resumption of talks with Syria

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel and Syria have been exchanging documents on a formula for resuming stalled peace talks but have not succeeded in reaching an agreement to return to the negotiating table, Israeli officials said Friday.

"Israel has effectively transmitted several messages to Damascus, mainly through the special European envoy for the Middle East, Miguel Moratinos," a senior foreign ministry official told AFP.

"We have assured Syria that we are not harbouring any aggressive intentions towards it and that we have not placed our troops on a state of alert," the official said.

"We have also shown our desire to return to the negotiations based on the Madrid conference (in March 1991) and Security Council Resolution 242," which calls for Israel's withdrawal from

occupied Arab territories.

But the official said Syria has responded by imposing demands that Israel considers unacceptable.

"(Syria) is not content with recommending that the negotiations resume on the principle of an exchange of land-for-peace, it is also demanding to begin with that Israel commits to withdraw from the Golan up to the June 4, 1967 line," he said.

The official also said that Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and his Syrian counterpart Farouk Al Sharaa could meet during the April conference of Mediterranean and North African foreign ministers in Malta.

Syria demands that talks resume at the point where they broke off last February with the previous Israeli Labour government, which agreed in principle to withdraw from the occupied

Golan Heights in exchange for a peace treaty.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of the Likud Party, who before coming to office in June ruled out any return of the Golan, has refused to negotiate based on these unwritten agreements and says talks must resume without preconditions.

During the weekly Israeli cabinet meeting, Mr. Netanyahu said he was keen for the talks with Syria to resume as quickly as possible officials said.

But he said he did consider himself "tied to the verbal commitments given by the previous government on a withdrawal from the Golan," an official said.

The Yediot Aharonot newspaper reported on Friday that the exchange of documents was carried out via U.S. and European intermediaries with the consent of Mr. Netanyahu and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad.

King returns after Umra and talks with King Fahd

Prince Saud to visit Jordan after 'Eid

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein returned home on Friday after performing the Umra pilgrimage and talks with Saudi Arabia's King Fahd that resulted in the scheduling of a visit to Jordan by the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud Al Faisal.

An official statement issued here said Prince Saud will visit Jordan after 'Eid Al Fitr, which marks the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan, to follow up on the talks launched during the meeting between the two monarchs on Thursday.

King Hussein, accompanied by members of the Royal family and Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabarti, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh and other officials, flew to Medina on Thursday. He was welcomed by Prince Mohammad Ben Abdul Aziz, governor of Medina, and senior Saudi officials.

King Hussein prayed at the Prophet Mohammad's Mosque in Medina before leaving for Mecca where he performed Umra.

King Hussein later visited Riyadh and met King Fahd for talks on issues of common concern and pan-Arab affairs.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said that in the talks, "which were held in a brotherly atmosphere, King Hussein noted that Jordan and Saudi Arabia were bound by very strong brotherly ties and called for efforts to be made to further stimulate common Arab action."

The two sides stressed the need for continued contacts among Arab leaders to enhance cooperation in political and economic fields. Petra said.

Upon his return to Amman the King and the delegation accompanying him were received by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and senior officials.

Albright talks tough on Sudan, Cuba and China

Cohen sworn in as defence secretary

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The United States will seek to obtain new United Nations sanctions against Sudan because of its alleged support for terrorism. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said on Friday.

"We will continue to insist that Sudan desist from supporting terrorist activities and will be following up in New York to try to get additional sanctions," Ms. Albright told a news conference.

Meanwhile, former Senator William Cohen of Maine was sworn in as defence secretary, putting a Republican in President Bill Clinton's cabinet.

Mr. Cohen took the oath from Vice-President Al Gore in the White House Oval Office with President Clinton standing behind him.

Mr. Clinton said the Senate's 99-0 vote to confirm Mr. Cohen "sent a strong signal of its intention to work ... in a bipartisan spirit to preserve and enhance our national security. Bill Cohen is the embodiment of that spirit."

Mr. Cohen told Mr. Clinton he looked forward to "serving you on a bipartisan team to a new century with clarity of purpose."

In Mr. Clinton's two terms, Mr. Cohen is the first and only Republican in the 14-member cabinet. Ms. Albright was sworn in Thursday as the nation's first female secretary of state.

In her press conference on Friday Ms. Albright said Washington would maintain its tough isolationist policy on Cuba and said it was a mistake to have a "romantic view" of communist leader Fidel Castro.

"Cuba is an embarrassment to the Western hemisphere and I think we need to keep making clear that there needs to be a change there," she said.

Ms. Albright, living up to her reputation for tough talk, also took on China over Hong Kong and human rights.

"I stated during my confirmation hearings that I would tell it like it is to the American people and to whatever foreign leaders I deal with," she told the press conference.

(Continued on page 7)

Barak ready to accept state for Palestinians

PARIS (Agencies) — The leading contender to take over Israel's opposition Labour Party said on Friday he accepted the likelihood of a Palestinian state and criticised party colleagues who sought common ground with the ruling Likud Party.

Ehud Barak, a former armed forces chief who served as foreign minister until last May, said on a visit to Paris that Israel had to accept that the outcome of Middle East peace negotiations could well be a limited Palestinian state, but it was not up to Labour to demand this.

"We should realise that the end result of the whole process might become a kind of Palestinian state, even if this state is limited by agreements that are reached," he said.

Mr. Barak indirectly criticised his main rival to succeed Shimon Peres as Labour leader, Yossi Beilin, for holding exploratory talks with Likud politicians on a possible minimum platform for final status negotiations with the Palestinians.

He warned that Labour could lose its identity, weaken its position in criticising Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hardline government and drive voters to vote for the secular leftist Meretz Party.

"In a way this kind of dialogue blurs the essence of difference instead of emphasising it," Mr. Barak told a

(Continued on page 7)

Editor of Abed Rabbo detained on charges of slander

Two others convicted amid mounting controversy over tabloids' ethics

By Rana Hussein

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The editor of a satiric weekly has been ordered detained by the Amman prosecutor for 15 days on charges for slandering a Jordanian deputy and a minister. A request to release him on bail was denied, official sources said Friday.

The prosecutor, Jamal Zoughby, said he issued the arrest order against Omar Nadi, editor-in-chief of the weekly Abed Rabbo, after complaints were filed by Minister of Public Works Abdul Hadi Majali and Islamist Deputy Ibrahim

Zeid Kilani.

Also on Thursday two editors of two weeklies were sentenced each to eight and nine months imprisonment by the Amman Court of First Instance after being found guilty of violating the Press and Publications Law.

Na'el Salah, editor of the 10-month-old weekly Al Haqia (the truth), who was detained for four days in July on charges of slander and lack of accuracy in reporting, was sentenced to nine months in prison and was ordered to pay JD15,000 for "spreading false news and publishing pornographic material."

"I am planning to appeal the sentence which was a surprise to me because this is the second time a journalist was sentenced to a prison term," Mr. Salah told the Jordan Times Friday.

In similar press and publication cases in the past, he added, journalists were ordered only to pay a maximum fine of JD 1,000.

Mr. Salah, who was standing trial at the court for 11 cases of the Press and Publications Law violations, was found guilty in three of those lawsuits. Khalid Kassabeh, former editor of the tabloid weekly Al Bilad, who is being tried in absentia, was

sentenced by the same court to eight-month imprisonment for publishing pornographic articles.

Mr. Kassabeh, who, according to informed sources, had emigrated to the United States, has 15 days to appeal the verdict.

If no appeal was made, the sources added, the sentence will be final.

Charges pressed by Mr. Zoughby against Mr. Nadi, who was arrested in his office, include overlooking objectivity, honesty and accuracy in reporting, publishing inaccurate news, slander and tarnishing the image and dignity of individuals.

"The reason I ordered Mr. Nadi's detention was the direct slander published against Deputy Kilani describing him as a 'hypocrite' and the direct accusation against Minister Majali of stealing cars," Mr. Zoughby said.

Mr. Zoughby told the Jordan Times Friday that Mr. Nadi pleaded not guilty to the charges, adding that the case will be referred to court within a few days.

Editor Abed Rabbo Yousef Gheishan charged that Mr. Kilani and Mr. Majali "are in a sensitive

(Continued on page 7)

UAE

Prepares second shipment of relief to Iraq

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A group of United Arab Emirates (UAE) volunteers is preparing to send a second shipment of food and medicine for Iraqi children, many of whom are suffering from malnutrition because of crippling U.N. sanctions.

Earlier this month, 10 UAE men sailed to Iraq with 32 tonnes of milk, medicine, hospital equipment and other items, in the first such shipment from an Arab country to Iraq since the embargo was imposed after Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

The second delivery will be much bigger, and volunteers have been promised a "surprise" by Sheikh Mohammad Ben Rashid Al Maktum, the crown prince of Dubai and UAE defence minister, who donated 1.5 million dirhams (\$408,000) to the previous shipment.

There will be a surprise by Sheikh Mohammad for the next trip. We don't know what it is," said Mohammad Rakan, information officer for the campaign.

Dubbed the "love trip," it will include one or two ships with a capacity of 1,100 tonnes and it will be launched in the first week of February. The two vessels have been donated by local businessmen.

The first shipment arrived in Iraq on Jan. 12 and the



Turkish trucks loaded with goods for Iraq wait at the border crossing. The flow of goods into Iraq through Turkey has gone up dramatically in recent months, reports say (AFP photo)

men themselves supervised the distribution of aid to children in hospitals.

"The situation in Iraq is really tragic. You just go there and see... children are suffering from malnutrition and diseases and there is a severe shortage in medical supplies and equipment at the hospitals," Mr. Rakan said.

"Some of our men could not stop crying when they saw the children... How could man in this age accept this situation. It is not their fault."

Mr. Rakan was speaking inside a large Arabian tent set up at the Abu Dhabi sea-side to collect cash and relief donations. Piles of clothes, milk bottles, medicine and other items filled the tent, which was adorned on the outside with slogans

reading "From the UAE people to the Iraqi children with love."

Mr. Rakan said there had been a rush by the public and companies to donate money and relief items and their campaign has received encouragement from officials.

"We have the blessing and support of their highnesses the president Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan, Sheikh Mohammad and the other rulers," Sheikh Zayed, 80, has repeatedly called for a reconciliation between Arab states and Iraq and urged a lifting of the embargo, which the United Nations says will only be removed once Iraq dismantles its programmes for weapons of mass destruction.

Last month, Iraq resumed exports of more than 500,000 barrels of oil a day under an agreement with the United Nations to finance food and medicine imports, the first easing of the embargo in more than six years.

"We are determined to help the Iraqi children. There will be a third ship and there could be a fourth and a fifth," Mr. Rakan said.

"Our objective is purely humanitarian and has nothing to do with politics or propaganda. We just want to help in saving the Iraqi children and to stir the human feelings everywhere... we hope others will follow suit."

According to French humanitarian group Equilibre quoting U.N. reports, the sanctions have caused the deaths of some 560,000 Iraqi children under five years old.

Mr. Rakan said the UAE men were moved by the reception from the Iraqis to the first shipment. "It was a tumultuous welcome which we had not expected. Thousands of them flocked to the port and were chanting for the UAE and carrying portraits of its president and rulers."

He said the first ship had not been disturbed by Western navies enforcing the U.N. embargo against Iraq because they had been officially informed about it.

In the last two years, the UAE government has sent a number of ships carrying aid to Iraq, although it has not had diplomatic relations with Baghdad since the 1991 Gulf war.

Netanyahu backs police probe into attorney general scandal

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Friday for a police probe into charges he nominated a close associate to be attorney general as part of a deal to spare a key political ally from conviction on corruption charges.

According to allegations in the Israeli media, Ariel Deri of the powerful ultra-orthodox party Shas had threatened to withhold his group's support for Mr. Netanyahu's agreement with the Palestinians last week to extend self-rule to Hebron if his choice for attorney general was not accepted.

According to a report on Israel's Channel 1 television, Mr. Deri allegedly had previously concluded an agreement with prospective attorney general, Roni Bar-On, that would have assured him a plea-bargain in his ongoing corruption trial.

Mr. Netanyahu angrily denied there was any connection between his nomination of Bar-On, a top official of his Likud Party, and Mr. Deri's legal problems or the Hebron agreement.

"There must be an independent and objective police investigation to reveal the truth in this affair," Mr. Netanyahu said Friday.

State prosecutor Edna Arbel was due to meet soon with the chief of police investigators to discuss the possibility of opening an investigation into the Bar-On affair, judicial sources said.

Shas is the second biggest party in Mr. Netanyahu's coalition government and its two ministers provided the prime minister with his majority when the cabinet voted 11 to seven to approve the Hebron deal last week.

Mr. Bar-On resigned within 12 hours of taking office under public criticism he was unfit for the job.

Mr. Deri, who three years ago was interim minister but now faces trial for allegedly accepting bribes, hoped Mr. Bar-On would drop some of the charges against him and

pave the way for his return to the cabinet, Israel television said earlier.

The attorney general is responsible for prosecuting political figures accused of illegal actions.

Mr. Netanyahu bowed to the pressure and nominated Mr. Bar-On to the post Jan. 10, five days before the Hebron deal was signed with the Palestinians and then approved by the Knesset, the television said.

But Mr. Bar-On, withdrew his nomination after the supreme court ordered a delay in his appointment following widespread protests from opposition and coalition members against the "political" appointment.

Labour Deputy Ophir Pines had filed a complaint with the court charging that Mr. Bar-On's appointment was politically motivated and designed to hinder investigations into right-wing politicians.

Mr. Bar-On, a well-known defence attorney and member of the central committee of Mr. Netanyahu's Likud Party, was to replace Michael Ben-Yair, an appointee of Israel's former Labour government who had angered the prime minister by indicting several of his close associates.

The justices did not rule that Mr. Bar-On's appointment was illegal, but said they wanted to study the written protocol on his nomination.

This latest turn in the affair, "if proven true, is the most serious violation of the rule of law Israel has ever seen. It's on the level of Watergate," Israeli radio's legal commentator Moshe Hanegbi said.

The television show by the story, saying it had "compromising" recordings of conversations of Mr. Deri praising the appointment of Mr. Bar-On.

The Labour Party demanded that a "state commission of inquiry" be set up to look into the matter while the far-left opposition Meretz Party has called for a police investigation.

Clerides grants pardon to three Israelis

NICOSIA (AFP) — Three Israelis involved in a daring escape bid from Cypriot police custody were granted a rare presidential pardon on Thursday, less than three months into their sentences.

Central Prison governor George Anastasiadis said the Israelis would be deported from Cyprus aboard a flight to Tel Aviv on Sunday.

David Biton, 24, and Shimon Amor, 28, stopped at gunpoint the police car Sept. 11 in which Biton's 21-year-old brother, Avi, a star of the Israeli youth football team, and a fourth Israeli, Shuki Samana, 24, were handcuffed.

David Biton and Amor severed the police radio link, cut the handcuffs off Avi Biton, and Samana and all four fled on two motorcycles across the green line and into Turkish-held northern Cyprus.

The northern authorities handed the four men to U.N. officials and they were sent back to Cyprus police.

They were tried in November with David Biton and Amor receiving four-year sentences, while Samana walked free and Avi Biton received a 30-month sentence for exchanging and possessing fake U.S. bills.

An Israeli embassy spokesman in Nicosia said he was unaware of the reasons for the pardon, but it is believed that defence lawyers, in filing for the deportation, cited the fact that their clients were the only three Israelis at the prison, which also houses about 150 Arabs.

They questioned the effectiveness of security measures to prevent any friction between the inmates, as there had been an earlier incident between one of the Israelis and an Arab prisoner.

U.S. journalists call for release of Turkish editor

NEW YORK (R) — More than 300 leading U.S. journalists, media executives and human rights activists on Thursday asked the Turkish government to immediately free jailed editor Ozgur Cundak.

A petition was handed to Turkish Ambassador Nuzhet Kandemir at the Turkish embassy in Washington by officials of the committee to protect journalists which last November gave Mr. Yurtcu its International Press

Freedom (CPS) award.

Mr. Yurtcu was sentenced to jail for allegedly publishing "separatist propaganda" about the conflict with Kurdish insurgents under Turkey's anti-terrorism laws. He was the editor of the now defunct daily Ozgur Gundem.

CPJ chairwoman Kati Marton said the Turkish ambassador agreed to send the petition to his government. The ambassador noted that many leading Turkish journalists and some government officials shared the group's

concerns, a statement from the journalist group said.

Among those signing the petition were Terry Anderson, the former AP reporter held hostage in Lebanon for seven years, New York editor Tina Brown, NBC anchorman Tom Brokaw, billionaire financier George Soros, Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel, CBS anchorman Dan Rather, New York Times publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, cartoonist Gary Trudeau and Time magazine editor Walter Isaacson.

U.S.: Company deals with Sudan and Syria are within law

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States said on Thursday it operated within the law in permitting American firms to do business with Sudan and Syria, which Washington considers state sponsors of terrorism.

Although Washington has imposed comprehensive sanctions on five countries on its "terrorism" list — Libya, Iran, Iraq, North Korea and Cuba — the sanctions on two other "terrorism" list states — Sudan and Syria — are "not total (but) partial," state department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

As a result, there can be no arms sales to Sudan and Syria and transfers of money to those countries "that would support acts of terrorism in the United States," he said.

But "if individual financial transactions are found not to have an impact on any potential act of terrorism or to fund

any group that supports terrorism, then... These financial transactions or investments may be permitted," he said.

The Washington Post reported on Thursday that the administration had eased a law barring financial transactions between U.S. corporations and countries accused of supporting terrorism to aid a California-based oil firm seeking a stake in a \$930 million deal in Sudan.

Quoting unidentified federal officials and documents, the newspaper said the August 1996 exemption to the anti-terrorism act — which President Bill Clinton signed just four months earlier — allowed Occidental Petroleum to seek a share of a major oil deal in Sudan.

The exemption cleared the way for the company to negotiate with the Khartoum government despite the

administration's avowed policy of restricting U.S. commerce with Sudan and six other countries blacklisted by the state department for supporting "terrorism," the Post said.

A state department official denied that Occidental had received any special treatment. "No exemptions to the Syria or Sudan regulations were requested or even discussed in any way by Occidental or any other company," said the official, who requested anonymity.

The newspaper also reported that a similar exemption for Syria was put into effect last August.

Mr. Burns told a news briefing he did not know details of the Occidental case.

The other State Department official said no waiver was needed because the regulations were written to allow business deals. He said when

Congress passed the anti-terrorism law, "at no point" was there any indication that anyone on the list wanted to curtail legitimate commercial or humanitarian transactions.

The Post said the Syria exemption was intended to encourage Damascus' participation in the Middle East peace process. But Mr. Burns said "I'm not aware of any instance where the United States has given Syria a break in the application of our law, because we wanted to promote a Syrian position on the Middle East negotiations."

The exemption for Sudan allowed Occidental to join Canada's Arakis Energy Corp in pursuing the development of a promising but abandoned oil field in southern Sudan containing an estimated 3.5 billion barrels, the Post said.

But the newspaper reported the Sudanese government

abruptly excluded Occidental from the Arakis-led consortium in November for "political reasons."

On a related matter, the United States called for neighbouring African countries to stop hiring mercenary units that are fighting in Sudan.

"We are aware that there are mercenary groups that hire themselves out... On one side or another in a variety of African countries in the past," Mr. Burns said, citing Angola and Sierra Leone.

"And our advice to the Angolans, and to the Sierra Leoneans, and our advice to all of the actors in eastern Sudan these days is not to hire mercenary outfits, not to bring arms in that just kill innocent civilians, but to try to lead the situation towards a peaceful outcome through negotiations," he said.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

13:30Cartoon
14:30Chris Cross
15:00 Feature Film — "Post the Beaches"
16:50 Call For Prayer And Iftar
17:05Documentary
17:30Muppet Show
18:00Serie — Jack
19:00Le Journal
19:15Magazine — Zira
19:30News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Hanging with Mr. Cooper
20:00 Oriental Rugs (Documentary)
20:30Prism
21:10Documentary
22:00News In English
22:25 Lois & Clark — The New Adventures of Superman
23:00Journey Into Islam
23:50McGyver
23:59 Feature Film: "The Wild Rivers"
01:05Ramadan Talks

PRAYER TIMES

05:09Fajr
06:29(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:48Dhuhr
04:42Asr
17:06Maghreb
18:27Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation

Tel. 637448
De la Salle Church Tel. 661656
Terrasanta Church Tel.
622466
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church
Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Armenian International Church
Tel. 827136
Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 834328

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932
Church of Nazarene Tel.
675691

The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Stable weather conditions will prevail with temperatures rising slightly. It will be relatively cold, skies cloudy, and winds northerly to northeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min/Max. temp.

Amman03/11
Aqaba08/18
Deserts02/13
Jordan Valley08/20

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 11, Aqaba 16 Humidity
readings: Amman 77 per cent,
Aqaba 65 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Fayed Al Dabbas759155
Dr. Adnan Zaghoul398140
Dr. Mazen Al Nhal830435
Dr. Fakher Bilbeisi552235
Firas pharmacy661912
Ferdows pharmacy778336
Al Asena pharmacy637055
Nairoukh pharmacy623672
Al Salam pharmacy636730
Yacoub pharmacy644945
Shmeisani pharmacy637660
Najib pharmacy847632

NIGHT DUTY

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Dr. Adnan Zaghoul398140
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Firas pharmacy661912
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Al Asena pharmacy637055
Nairoukh pharmacy623672
Al Salam pharmacy636730
Yacoub pharmacy644945
Shmeisani pharmacy637660
Najib pharmacy847632

Dr. Mazen Abu Baker76852
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Mazen Al Safarini985832
Khalef pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre637111

Civil Defence Department

661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue
630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192621111
637777

Fire Brigade617101

Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Department
630321
Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints
897467
Amman Municipality Complaints
787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance)121

Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs
661101
Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority680100
Jordan Electricity Authority
815615
Electric Power Company
636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre

Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn

642816
Aldileh Maternity, J. Amn.
642412
Jabal Amman Maternity
642262
Malhas, J. Amman636140
Palestine, Shmeisani
607071
Shmeisani Hospital669131
University Hospital845845
Al-Musabir Hospital 6672279
The Islamic, Abdali 66612637
Al-Ahli, Abdali6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen
7771013
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh
77511126
Army, Marks891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and
Special Surgery865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikam Modern Hospital (09)990990

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:55Damascus (RJ)
09:45New Delhi (RJ)
09:55Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:05Beirut (RJ)
10:30Colombo (RJ)
14:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:20Cairo (RJ)
17:40London, Beirut (RJ)
19:35Vienna (RJ)
04:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
05:35Bangkok (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

12:40Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:05Vienna (OS)
18:15Dubai, Damascus (EK)
21:00Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:20Larnaca (CY)
22:25Beirut (ME)
22:35Cairo (MS)
23:40Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (08) 52700 or (08) 523250.

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20Beirut (RJ)
09:45Jakarta (add) (RJ)
11:05Vienna (RJ)
11:30Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:50Paris, Brussels (RJ)
12:00Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:15London (RJ)
12:15Cairo (RJ)
20:00Bombay (RJ)
20:05Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
20:15Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:20Larnaca (CY)
20:30Jeddah (RJ)
21:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
23:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

00:15Damascus, Amsterdam (KL)
03:00Beirut, Athens (OA)
07:00Beirut (ME)
13:30Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
15:50Vienna (OS)
19:15Dubai (EK)
23:10Larnaca (CY)
23:30Cairo (MS)
23:55Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (AF)
00:40Amsterdam (KL)
04:35Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

01:00London, Damascus (BA)
03:45Rome (AZ)
23:50London (KL)
01:00London, Damascus (BA)
03:45Rome (AZ)

HJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple700/500
Banana550/550
Banana (imported)900/700
Cabbage60/40
Carrot200/160
Cauliflower170/100
Cucumber (large)180/100
Cucumber (small)330/200
Eggplant150/100
Fava beans800/650
Garlic1100/850
Grape fruit150/80
Lemon360/250
Marrow (large)140/100
Marrow (small)220/180
Onion (green)180/100
Onion (dry)180/100
Orange550/400
Peas850/700
Pepper (hot)280/180
Pepper (sweet)280/180
Potato260/160
Radish130/100
Spinach230/150
String beans600/400
Tomato150/100

London (KL)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
20:30Aqaba (RW)

HJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

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Eggplant150/100
Fava beans800/650
Garlic1100/850
Grape fruit150/80
Lemon360/250
Marrow (large)140/100
Marrow (small)220/180
Onion (green)180/100
Onion (dry)180/100
Orange550/400
Peas850/700
Pepper (hot)280/180
Pepper (sweet)280/180
Potato260/160
Radish130/100
Spinach230/150
String beans600/400
Tomato150/100

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AMMAN (J.T.) — was reported missing Public Security De (PSD) at Muwaqqar result of a downpour caused flooding and Thursday

impacting the parts of the count. Reports in the lo Friday quoted PSD as saying that the old boy was in the of his father when which they were broke down Muwaqqar Valley.

JNFW

AMMAN (J.T.) — role of the Jordanian Forum for (JNFW) in promoting was the the meeting organised JNFW in Amman creation with the m of Aqwaq and Educ

Ms. Najah N supporter for the in the Amman region the meeting that illiteracy was a al duty for Jo women in general JNFW in particu confirmed that the

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UNDP to imp AMMAN (Petra) — a project, designed to ing to Director General to formulate a legal field monitoring, Dr European Union for

Taleban strengthen positions at mouth of strategic valley

KABUL (AFP) — Afghanistan's Taleban Islamic militia was Friday consolidating its new frontline positions north of Kabul after ousting opposition troops from two key towns in the area, officials said.

The Mujahideen of the Islamic army are strengthening their positions at the mouth of Panjshir (Valley) and have started clean-up operations in Gulbahr, Taleban-run Radio Shariat reported.

In a two-pronged offensive Thursday, Taleban troops seized the strategic towns of Jabul Siraj, 77 kilometres north of Kabul, and Gulbahr, 95 kilometres northeast of Kabul, dealing a severe blow to the opposition coalition.

The Taleban then advanced 15 kilometres northwards into the crucial Salang Valley, heading towards the northern field of warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum, one of the leading figures in the anti-Taleban coalition.

"The defeated enemies have lost their morale," Radio Shariat said, adding that 80 anti-Taleban troops were killed in the battle.

Apart from the strategic crucial towns, the Taleban also seized scores of precious tanks, armoured vehicles, weapons, prisoners and supplies from the fleeing troops of the anti-Taleban alliance, the report said.

The religious militia's fighters were Friday digging in at Gulbahr, which guards the mouth of the Panjshir Valley — the main stronghold of the ousted

Afghan government's top commander, Ahmad Shah Masood, sources said.

Taleban troops were preparing to launch a house-to-house search of the newly captured towns to neutralise the possibility of local uprisings by ex-government loyalists, they added.

The militia, who captured the area with lightning speed last September after seizing Kabul, lost it again within days after failing to suppress local revolts or to consolidate their newly formed positions.

Witnesses said the Taleban appeared satisfied with their battlefield gains this time and did not seem to be keen to advance deeper into the narrow and snow-covered opposition-held valleys near the towns, as they did after four months ago.

Local leaders in Gulbahr, taking advantage of the full, came out to greet their new rulers who looked nervous about being attacked from inside the newly-captured villages.

A man who said he had been beaten by the religious militia wandered around the town with a gash in his head and a blood-stained face.

Meanwhile, in Jabul Siraj, Taleban fighters were roaming around Mr. Masood's former guest house in the town looking for booty in his former headquarters, the sources said.

Radio Shariat said the retreating opposition troops had left behind 150 prisoners and "hundreds" of tanks, trucks, armoured vehicles, as well as a large quantity of ammunition. Journalists visiting the

area Thursday saw dozens of tanks and armoured vehicles mounted with anti-aircraft guns, trucks full of food and ammunition which had been captured by the Taleban.

The two victories allow the Taleban — who now control more than two-thirds of war-torn Afghanistan — access to the doorstep of the heavily-fortified Panjshir and to the crucial Salang Valley to the north.

Gulbahr was defended by Mr. Masood's ethnic Tajik soldiers while Jabul Siraj, located on the highway linking Kabul with the central Asian republics, was under the control of Gen. Dostum's Uzbek militia.

Both towns are strategically important and at the centre of a territorial tug-of-war between the fundamentalist Islamic militia and Mr. Masood's forces since they overrun Kabul on Sept. 27.

The losses mean the opposition forces have been flushed out of the southern edges of the Hindu Kush range, dealing them a severe military blow.

Reports said the morale of Mr. Masood's fighters had been sagging since they lost Charikar and Bagram Air Base.

Meanwhile, ousted Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani and Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar are in Iran for peace talks on Afghanistan, but their arch-rival, the Taliban Islamic militia, failed to attend, the Iranian news agency (IRNA) said.

Mr. Rabbani and Mr. Hekmatyar, whose government in Kabul was toppled by the

Taliban in September, arrived late Thursday and were greeted by Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati.

The leader of the pro-Iranian Hezb-I-Wahdat, Mohammad Akbari, and a representative from Uzbek warlord General Dostum, are also here for the talks to begin Saturday.

The Mujahideen groups sending representatives here have entered an alliance against the Taleban militia in a bid to take back their lost territory.

Sebatollah Mojaddadi, the head of the interim government installed after the fall of the Soviet-backed regime in 1992, arrived Wednesday. Iran has also invited the Taleban and its main backer Pakistan to attend the negotiations aimed at forging a consensus to resolve the Afghan conflict.

IRNA said Thursday the Taleban had agreed to take part and its team was already on its way. But no one from the militia has arrived despite wide expectations among the officials to receive a Taleban delegation late Thursday.

Both the militia and Islamabad boycotted another peace conference on Afghanistan held here in October.

Shi'ite Muslim Iran is wary of the ultra-orthodox Sunni Muslim Taleban, which it describes as "fanatic," and continues to recognise Mr. Rabbani's government.

Tehran accuses Islamabad of aiding the Taleban in its crusade to control all of Afghanistan and set up a fundamentalist Islamic state, a charge denied by Pakistan.



German Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel (left) shakes hands with Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral in New Delhi Thursday. Mr. Kinkel on an official visit to India, said he hoped more could be done to bring home a German tourist kidnapped 18 months ago in Kashmir (Reuters photo)

Bonn, Delhi call for end to U.N. 'bias'

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India and Germany Friday supported each other's bids to become permanent members to the United Nations Security Council and called for major reforms to the international body.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel told reporters here that Bonn and New Delhi believed the U.N. was hamstrung by a post-World War II bias.

"India and Germany are working at the same objective of reforming the U.N.," he said. "The Security Council is not a reflection of the present order but represents the world as it stood at the end of the war."

"India is entitled to claiming a seat. India is a candidate we would support (but) it is ultimately up to Asia to decide which country should represent it in the Security Council."

There are five permanent members in the Security Council — Britain, China, France, the United States and Russia.

There are 10 other rotating members. India's hopes of winning a non-permanent seat were foiled in October when Japan was elected ahead of it.

Mr. Kinkel said India's

opposition to a comprehensive test ban treaty last year had cost its U.N. ambitions dear.

"It would be wrong to deny that such a connection exists," he said. "We would like India to review its decision but we are not trying to preach."

"We respect that India can have a separate stand," Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral backed Mr. Kinkel by saying: "We both agreed that there is a need to reform the U.N. to reflect contemporary realities."

"We would like to see Germany permanently in the Security Council. A few World War II, some countries were discriminated against."

"Germany was made a victim. Japan was made a victim and the developing world was made a victim. Some countries made first-class citizens of themselves."

Mr. Kinkel also said Germany would support Indian participation in the second summit of the Asia-Europe meeting to be held in London later this year. India was not invited to the inaugural conference of the new trade grouping last

March.

"India ought to be part of the negotiations. India, China and Japan are the three major Asian countries," he said. "It is not acceptable that 950 million people are being excluded from the dialogue."

Mr. Kinkel also invited India to bilateral talks on global security, adding: "I would like to discuss technological hazards and how to avoid them. Think of Chernobyl and the safety of nuclear power plants. These are cross-country issues."

The German minister, who arrived here Thursday at the head of a large trade delegation for a three-day visit, also discussed trade ties and Kashmir.

"We believe that tension should be defused in the region," he said. "We believe that bilateral talks between India and Pakistan should be resumed. The logic of insurgency should be countered with the logic of dialogue."

A Muslim separatist campaign against Indian rule in Kashmir has cost some 17,000 lives since 1989. Pakistan also claims the territory.

China crackdown on H. Kong civil rights sparks protests

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong's democracy movement Friday likened Beijing's plans to curb civil liberties in the territory to the brutal purges of China's radical 1966-76 Cultural Revolution.

The pro-democracy camp staged a small but noisy protest Friday morning at the office of post-colonial leader Tung Chee-hwa, who will succeed British Governor Chris Patten after the handover at midnight on June 30.

"Protect freedom of assembly. Protect freedom of association," they shouted. "Human rights cannot be infringed upon."

A handful wore tall hats and hung labels around their necks, harking back to the Cultural Revolution when those who were politically persecuted were forced to wear dunce caps and hang boards around their necks with their names crossed out. They were paraded through the streets and beaten. Many died.

Pro-democracy activists are campaigning against plans to scrap or amend 25 Hong Kong laws, some of them crucial to civil liberties, on July 1.

Laws facing the axe include parts of the Bill of Rights and laws allowing freedom of assembly and association.

The Hong Kong group called for an all-night sit-down protest outside China's de facto embassy, the Xinhua News Agency branch office, opposite the Happy Valley Race Course. Other protests were planned for Sunday.

"I don't think we can be masters of our own house," Yeung Sum, deputy leader of the Democratic Party, told reporters when asked what the latest developments boded for the autonomy that China has promised Hong Kong after the handover.

"The Chinese Communist Party is master of the house, and Mr. Tung is the servant of the Chinese Communist Party," he said.

Democratic Party leader Martin Lee was due to set off on an eight-nation tour of Europe Sunday to lobby for support for human rights, freedom and democracy in post-handover Hong Kong.

The reduction of civil liberties was proposed by a China-controlled committee

last Sunday and would be implemented by a provisional legislature that China is installing in July to replace the elected Legislative Council.

The provisional body was to convene for its first sitting across the border in the Chinese city of Shenzhen Saturday, when it is to elect its president and set rules of procedure.

Britain is handing Hong Kong back to China after more than 150 years of colonial rule, under a 1984 treaty in which China promised to preserve the territory's capitalist system and free enterprise way of life for a further half century.

Hong Kong's leading English-language newspaper, the South China Morning Post, voiced concern that the changes would scrap a habeas corpus law that curbs police rights to detain people.

"It prevents people from being arbitrarily arrested and held without trial, or detained without good reason," the newspaper said. "Habeas corpus is one of the greatest safeguards to individual liberty in the canon of law."

China denounces Dalai Lama for spreading 'lies' about Tibet overseas

BEIJING (AFP) — China Friday renewed pressure on exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, accusing him of lying about its rule in the Himalayan region during his travels last year.

The attack, in a commentary carried by the official China Daily, also targeted a chorus of "biased" Western media, which it said had promoted false information originating from the spiritu-

al leader.

In his 1996 travels, the Dalai Lama "showed up in Denmark, Germany, Australia and South Africa under all kinds of excuses, trying to convince the world with his groundless 'bad news' about Tibet and win sympathy," it said.

"Some biased Western media have joined the anti-China chorus by promoting the 'bad news' ... but those people who have some

basic knowledge about Tibet will not be fooled by lies and fabrications," said the commentary, which was also published in full by the official Xinhua News Agency.

"Prejudiced Western media" have supported the Dalai Lama's allegations of cultural genocide in Tibet by reporting that Chinese were pulling down buildings in Lhasa's historic old city, it said.

Japan criticises Russia over oil spill response

TOKYO (AFP) — Heavy oil from a Russian tanker reached another Japanese prefecture on the Sea of Japan coast Friday as a Japanese minister expressed "regret" over Russia's slow response to the environmental disaster.

Oil from the tanker Nakhodka was found Friday at Nezukaseki, at the border of Yamagata and Niigata prefectures, nearly 500 kilometres northeast from where the tanker sank on Jan. 2. Japanese Coast Guard officials said.

Transport Minister Makoto Koga expressed "regret" over Russia's slow response at a news conference Friday, and said the ministry has set up a special committee to investigate the cause of the tanker accident, ministry officials said.

He said the ministry had proposed to Russia through the Foreign Ministry to conduct a joint investigation.

"It would be impermissible if the Russian government does not cooperate with investigation by our country, which suffered damages," he was reported as saying.

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto told a parliamentary session that Tokyo had requested Russia's "appropriate handling" of the accident via the Russian embassy in Tokyo and officials in Moscow.

"The government, through diplomatic channels, has been seeking the Russian side's cooperation for preventing a further oil spill, thorough investigation on the accident's cause, measures to prevent a recurrence, and compensation of damage."

"We will continue to ask the Russian side to cooperate in tackling these issues," Mr. Hashimoto said.

"The government will also examine how Japan can cooperate with neighbouring countries (on marine accidents)," he said.

Mr. Hashimoto noted that Japan was working towards hosting a conference on pollution in the Sea of Japan in mid-1997 by inviting China, Russia and South Korea.

Thousands of tonnes of oil have leaked from the tanker, ruining fishery resources and causing other environmental damage along the Sea of Japan coast.

"We held talks Monday and Tuesday with Russian experts in Tokyo, but it became clear that they did not have the authority over inter-governmental cooperation," a Transport Ministry official said.

"Internationally, when an accident like this happens, Russia should take the lead in investigation. But we are not yet in a stage to officially hold a joint investigation. So we decided to set up a committee."

Oil from the 13,157-tonne Nakhodka, which broke into two in a storm and sank in the Sea of Japan on Jan. 2, has already hit nine prefectures — Yamagata, Tottori, Shimane, Hyogo, Kyoto, Fuku, Ishikawa, Toyama and Niigata.

The tanker was carrying 17,100 tonnes of fuel oil when it sank while on its way from China to the Russian Far East peninsula of Kamchatka.

Rough weather continued to disrupt work to drain oil from the tanker's bow, which has run aground off Mikuni in Fukui prefecture, some 350 kilometres northwest of Tokyo.

Aichi Bank Ltd., a regional bank based in central Japan, donated 1,600 pairs of raincoats to disaster headquarters to help clean up the oil.

Chechenya hopes elections will consolidate peace

GROZNY, Russia (AFP) — Chechens are expected to choose between their top wartime general and a radical young guerrilla commander in presidential elections Monday which are hoped will consolidate the peace process.

No matter who wins, Moscow is sure to face a leader determined to complete Chechenya's de facto independence — the 21-month war to drive Russian troops out of the tiny Muslim Caucasus republic.

But how Chechen-Russian relations develop will largely depend on the struggle between the two very different front-runners. Leading is Aslan Maskhadov, the silver-haired guerrilla general who masterminded Chechen strategy against the far more numerous and powerfully armed Russian army.

Mr. Maskhadov, 45, is also Moscow's choice. A skilful but diplomatic negotiator who was a colonel

in the Soviet army, he signed the accord ending the war with then Kremlin security chief Alexander Lebed on Aug. 31, 1996.

Crucially for future peace in Chechenya, he is ready to keep doors open to the minority who opposed fighting to defend the republic's unilateral independence and collaborated with the Russian authorities.

Behind Mr. Maskhadov, and many believe closing in, is Moscow's and the collaborators' nightmare — battlefield Commander Shamil Basayev.

His many exploits against the Russians include penetrating with 150 men into the southern Russian town of Budennovsk in June 1995, taking 1,500 hostages and forcing the Kremlin to begin peace talks, a pause which saved the hard pressed Chechens from defeat.

Unlike the more reticent Maskhadov, Commander Basayev, 32, has campaigned furiously

Appealing to the thousands of fighters and the deeply Islamic character of the independence movement, his main slogan is: "There is no power but Allah, there is no power except for his power, there is no law except for his law."

Like a traditional Chechen warlord, he travels from village to village in a convoy which includes flashy Mercedes, battle-scarred jeeps and the U.S. army's lumbering Humvee all-terrain vehicle.

But proving a born politician, he has moved away from the purely military image and now dons a smart overcoat and talks about liberalising the economy at rallies.

In this way, Commander Basayev has succeeded in widening his electorate from the fighters to ordinary people who see him as the only man capable of cracking down on poverty, kidnappings, hijackings and other crimes.

S. Korea reopens door to investment in North

SEOUL (R) — South Korea opened the door for domestic companies to invest in rival North Korea Friday for the first time since a submarine incursion shut off all contact between the two sides.

The unification ministry said it had given approval to seven firms to open talks with North Koreans to develop joint projects ranging from garment making to soft drinks.

All contacts were frozen after a North Korean Shark-class submarine dropped 26 intruders on a southern beach last September.

Pyeonggang issued a rare apology last month for the incident, prompting new progress towards peace talks between the two Koreas, the United States and China.

This week, the South Korean Red Cross said it would resume aid shipments to North Korea and the first consignment of flour and socks would be despatched this month.

The seven firms include Lotte Group, LG International Corp, Shin Won Corp, Korea Green Cross Corp, Taechang Co. Ltd and Dong Hae Trading Co.

To initiate talks, South Korean firms usually must meet North Koreans in third countries, such as China, because direct travel is restricted.

The only South Korean firm allowed a permanent presence in North Korea is the giant Daewoo Group. It runs a joint venture textile factory.

But company executives and government officials cautioned that any improvement in economic cooperation would be difficult until overall Korean ties improved, and they ruled out any immediate rush of investment to the North.

Seoul first allowed business links with the North in the late 1980s in the hope contact could thaw decades of hostility.

Khmer Rouge says it wants to take part in local elections

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — The run-up to local elections in Cambodia took a new twist Friday as the outlawed Khmer Rouge said it wants to enter the race and co-Premier Hun Sen ruled out joining a new political alliance.

In a radio broadcast monitored in Bangkok, a Khmer Rouge spokesman said the rebel group supported the holding of free and democratic elections in 1997 and 1998 and could consider taking part in the polls.

"The spokesman said that it was necessary," the Khmer Rouge would "be ready to prepare a plan and programme to participate in regional elections in 1997 in order to take part in the destiny of the Khmer nation and people."

Meanwhile, second Prime Minister Hun Sen said his Cambodian People's Party (CPP) would not jump aboard an alliance being formed by his chief rival in the coalition government,

the Royalist FUNCINPEC Party.

"We are not going to join with any front," Mr. Hun Sen told reporters at the opening of a CPP congress.

"We will also not join any front, but we will cooperate with any political party that wants us to."

Mr. Hun Sen's rejection came a day after first Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh, the president of FUNCINPEC, confirmed the creation of a front, which he said was really patriotic.

Tension between the CPP and FUNCINPEC, former battlefield enemies who are now the main partners in the coalition government, has increased in recent months to the point where armed clashes have broken out in the northwest.

Nation Party (KNP) and the Democratic National Union Movement (DNUM) — a breakaway Khmer Rouge faction.

Two other groups, a wing of the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party and the Khmer Neutral Party, were reviewing the charter and the prince said he expected a positive reply from both.

In rejecting the offer to join the new alliance, Mr. Hun Sen said the CPP would continue to work together in the government and that his party would not oppose the creation of the front.

"It is good for them because it is their political right," he said. "I respect their right but I also request them to respect our rights in making alliances with other parties."

But he also said he believed the effort was an obvious attempt by the front's members to "topple the CPP."

soft-ped on U.N. condemnation of China

BRUSSELS (AFP) — United States is soft-pedalling on efforts to condemn China's human rights abuses, condemned United Nations in a secure concession Beijing on the rights of political prisoners.

Washington's approach outlined in a confidential diplomatic telegram this week to the 15 states of the European Union (EU), a copy of which was seen by AFP.

The document is that Washington is to jointly sponsor a resolution at the U.N. Human Rights Commission annual meeting in March 10-April 18, China's rights performance improves.

"We are continuing to talk with the Chinese about what meaningful steps they might take to avoid confrontation with us," it states.

In an indication of moves Washington is seeking, the document states that U.S. officials with China have for some time been discussing the release of political prisoners, including a number of discussions with International Red Cross prison visits.

Crucially, however, the United States fails to set a deadline for when it will conclude that Beijing is going to deliver and lobby other states to join the U.N. mission to back a resolution which would condemn China's crackdown on dissidents.

Human rights watchdogs fear that the less the European Union and the United States put pressure on China, the more it will advance the U.N. mission to back a resolution which would condemn China's crackdown on dissidents.

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Amnesty

NAIROBI (AFP) — Amnesty International has urged the United Nations to force reparations from the Kenyan government.

The criticism of the Kenyan government's handling of the 1992-93 election violence was reported by the U.N. Human Rights Commission in a report received here.

The statement, prepared by the Kenyan government, also accuses the United Nations of "failing to take any action against the Kenyan government."

Japan criticises Russia over oil spill response

OSAKA (AP) — Japan's foreign ministry on Friday criticized Russia's slow response to an oil spill in the Sea of Okhotsk, near the Japanese coast.

The ministry said it was disappointed that the Russian government had not taken more effective measures to prevent further oil from leaking into the sea.

The spill occurred on January 12 when the Russian tanker *Neftyanik* ran aground near the Japanese coast, leaking about 1,000 tonnes of oil.

The Japanese government has been pushing for a speedy resolution of the dispute, but the Russian government has been slow to respond.

The ministry said it was disappointed that the Russian government had not taken more effective measures to prevent further oil from leaking into the sea.

Hands with Kinked on a German

BERLIN (AP) — A German court on Friday found a man guilty of sexual assault on a woman, despite the fact that the woman had been drinking heavily at the time of the assault.

The court said the man had used force to overcome the woman's resistance, even though she was intoxicated.

The woman, who was 24 years old, had been drinking with friends at a bar when the man, who was 28, approached her.

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bias

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States is soft-pedaling on efforts to get China's human rights abuses condemned by the United Nations in a bid to secure concessions from Beijing on the rights of political prisoners.

Washington's approach is outlined in a confidential diplomatic telegram sent this week to the 15 member states of the European Union (EU), a copy of which was seen by AP.

The document indicates that Washington is willing to jointly sponsor a critical resolution at the U.N. Human Rights Commission's annual meeting in Geneva, March 10-April 18, unless China's rights performance improves.

"We are continuing to talk with the Chinese about what meaningful concrete steps they might take to avoid confrontation in Geneva," it states.

In an indication of the kind of moves Washington is seeking, the document states that U.S. contacts with China have focused on the release of political prisoners needing medical treatment and a resumption of discussions with the International Red Cross on prison visits.

Crucially however, the United States fails to set a deadline for when it will conclude that Beijing is not going to deliver and begin lobbying other states represented on the U.N. commission to back a resolution which would underline international disapproval of China's crackdown on dissidents.

Human rights watchdog organizations fear that unless the European Union and the United States begin putting pressure on African and Asian states well in advance of the March meeting, there is little prospect of the resolution mustering the required majority in the 53-member commission.

China, which successfully headed off a critical resolution in Geneva last year, has already embarked on its own campaign to prevent any embarrassing criticism of its rights record, warning that supporters of the resolution could see their trade and investment interests in the country's booming free enterprise zones suffer.

The importance of joint EU-U.S. action to counteract this is underlined in the American message. "If we are to proceed, an important piece of our lobbying strategy should be joint démarches by co-sponsors to other commission members," it states.

But even if the United States seeks to push ahead with this approach, the EU will not now be able to come on board until late February at the earliest after failing Thursday in its third attempt to agree a common strategy.

In a meeting of the human rights working group, made up of senior officials from the 15 EU states, France and Italy maintained their veto on a confrontation with China in Geneva.

The EU will not now finalise its position until foreign ministers meet next on Feb. 24, less than three weeks before the Geneva talks are due to open.

U.S. soft-pedals on U.N. condemnation of China

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New United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan (left) speaks at the White House after meeting President Clinton Thursday (Reuters photo)

Clinton upbeat on U.N. debt

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton promised to pay off hefty U.S. debts to the United Nations Thursday and in return Secretary-General Kofi Annan pledged that the world body would carry out wide-ranging reforms.

"Simply put, what the United Nations wants is what the U.S. also wants — a reformed United Nations that is effective, efficient, leaner and relevant to the tasks that member states want to set for us," he said.

The United States legally owes the world body \$1.3 billion, but the computation in Washington is \$500 million less because of unilateral deductions by Congress over the years, especially since Republicans came to power in 1994.

Mr. Annan was backed strongly by the Clinton administration when he was elected to succeed Dr. Ghali, who had been vilified by conservatives in Congress for his independence and as a block to fundamental reforms.

Mr. Annan also made some headway in a meeting with more than a dozen members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, headed by Senator Jesse Helms, a longtime foe of the United Nations.

In a statement welcoming Mr. Annan, Sen. Helms told him that if his reforms were piecemeal "you will have a very difficult time convincing Congress to send more American tax dollars to the U.N. So, Mr. Annan, the ball is in your court."

Sen. Helms said he planned to introduce legislation setting benchmarks — or conditions — for reform before any funds could be paid.

U.N. officials said Mr. Annan and Sen. Helms agreed to have their staffs meet soon to discuss legislation the committee was drawing up.

But despite the cooperation, unilateral conditions imposed on 185 member states belonging to the United Nations may meet tough resistance, particularly the European Union countries and Japan who pay for most of the world body.

Most Republican leaders have expressed a willingness to pay off the debt but several have attached conditions that appear beyond the power of any U.N. chief to deliver.

New York Republican Benjamin Gilman, chairman of the House International Relations Committee, told Mr. Annan Wednesday U.S. dues should be cut from 25 per cent to 20 per cent of the U.N. regular budget, which is calculated by members' wealth.

Mr. Annan, however, in comments earlier in the day warned that reform could not be accomplished on a "shoestring budget."

Mr. Annan said he sensed a "new beginning" in relations with Washington. He said it was symbolic that he was Mr. Clinton's first prominent visitor since the president's second-term inauguration Monday.

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Algerian terror wave death toll tops 200

ALGIERS (AP) — An armed group attacked a farm on the southern edge of the capital overnight and slit the throats of 15 people, informed sources said Friday, putting a terror wave death toll over 200.

The latest violence came hours before President Liamine Zerroual was to make a speech on nationwide radio and television at 8 p.m. (1900 GMT) Friday. Mr. Zerroual was expected to say whether he still planned legislative elections by June.

Ten women and two children were among the 15 killed by the unidentified group overnight Thursday, the sources said on condition of anonymity.

There was no claim of responsibility, but suspicion fell on Muslim militants waging a five-year-old insurgency that has left more than 60,000 dead.

The overnight attack brought to 210 the number of people killed since the militants launched an wave of car-bombings, massacres and other attacks during the Holy Month of Ramadan, which began Jan. 10. Five

hundred others have been wounded, and most of the victims have been civilians.

The militants seek to undermine efforts by Mr. Zerroual's military-backed government to organise legislative elections by mid-year. Mr. Zerroual's constitutional reform approved in a disputed referendum in November has outlawed religious-based parties the militants support.

In another massacre Thursday, an armed group slit the throats of 26 people in Benramdane, a village 25 kilometres south of Algiers.

Four members of a policeman's family were slain in the same fashion at their home in Baraki, a suburb southeast of the capital, family members said. They spoke on condition of anonymity.

On Thursday evening, the mayor of Bachdjarr, a suburb south of Algiers, was shot to death, his family said. They asked that his name not be released.

The Baraki and Bachdjarr suburbs were considered Islamic strongholds two years ago, but repeated

operations by security forces were believed to have forced out the militants, and the areas had been considered relatively safe from violence.

In the village of Benramdane, a government-backed "self-defence" group has been active, according to inhabitants.

These groups have become an important part of the government's effort to crush the militants. Organised in 1994, the groups have about 200,000 members, compared to 105,000 troops in Algeria's army.

They now have become targets of the militants' attacks.

On Wednesday night, a fifth car-bomb in four days killed 10 people and wounded 30 outside a meeting place for militia groups in Boufarik, 40 kilometres south of Algiers, residents said.

Algerian opposition groups criticised the government Thursday for its silence on the wave of violence.

Government-controlled media have only briefly mentioned the attacks, and

officials have been completely silent.

Even the National Liberation Front, the former ruling party that backs the regime, has called on the state to "assume its responsibilities."

In Algiers Thursday, young men stood watch, set up barricades and checked pedestrians with large packages in a citizens' effort to stave off future attacks.

It's the politicians "that put this country where it is," said Said Mehal, a 24-year-old vegetable seller in Algiers, his eyes strained from a night of keeping vigil.

"They can just stay at home, protected by their walls and their bodyguards," said his friend Krimo, 22 and unemployed.

The Islamic insurgency began after the government cancelled January 1992 parliamentary elections the Islamic Salvation Front was expected to win on voter discontent with corruption and 25 per cent unemployment in the petroleum-rich nation.

The militants seek to establish a state based on strict Koranic law.

S. Korean strike leaders to leave cathedral

SEOUL (R) — South Korea's strike leaders said they would leave Seoul's Myongdong Cathedral Friday after spending almost a month in a makeshift tent on the church grounds directing strikes against a new labour law.

Bae Bom-Shik, deputy president of the outlawed Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, told Reuters the union leaders planned to pack up the tent during the day.

"We will leave Myongdong Cathedral today. Details will be announced later," he said.

The decision follows a dramatic concession by President Kim Young-Sam suspending arrest warrants against confederation head Kwon Young-Kil and other unionists.

As part of his climbdown, Mr. Kim also agreed Tuesday to reopen parliamentary debate over the controversial law, which sparked more than three weeks of wildcat stoppages that hurt the economy.

Factories and businesses operated normally Thursday.

The move by confederation heads to abandon their strike headquarters would help ease almost a month of tension between the government and union leaders over

the law, which allows companies to sack workers and replace strikers.

The confederation leaders pitched their headquarters tent on the icy grounds of the cathedral on the same day the ruling New Korea Party rammed the labour bill through parliament in a dawn session on Dec. 26 while opposition deputies slept.

Mr. Kim's sudden reversal came after the confederation decided to call off indefinite stoppages and limit industrial action to one day each week, Wednesday.

Mr. Kwon however said since said the confederation would continue protests

until the government scrapped the law — an action that Mr. Kim has said would go against the constitution.

On Wednesday, police allowed Mr. Kwon to lead a protest march through Seoul streets.

But Labour Minister Jin Nyeum said Thursday the government would no longer tolerate illegal strikes, and the ruling party blasted the opposition for rejecting the offer to reopen parliamentary debate on the new law.

Mr. Jin did not specify what measures would be taken against strikers.

Zaire presses counter-offensive against rebels

KISANGANI (AFP) — The Zairean army set Friday to press on with a counter-offensive against rebels in the east of the country, aiming to cut the rebel troops off from their rear bases, reliable sources said.

The army launched the long-expected attacks on the Tutsi-led rebels Thursday.

A Defence Ministry statement said 100 rebel soldiers had been killed in clashes well into territory seized by the Tutsi-led insurgents late last year, near the town of Walikale, a major road junction leading to Goma in the east and Bukavu.

Reliable sources also said Zairean soldiers had recaptured the tiny cross-roads town of Nya-Nya on the road from Kisangani to Bunia, a diamond-mining town held by rebels, and the town of Mambasa, performing a pincer movement aimed at cutting off the rebels in Bunia.

Military sources said the army used helicopters and small fighter aircraft in the attacks which they said were aimed at cutting the rebels' supply routes.

Zairean forces on the eastern front have recently been equipped with Saia-Marchetti Italian jet aircraft and Russian-built Mi-24 helicopter gunships of the type used extensively by Soviet forces in Afghanistan.

The rebels — mainly Tutsis and Mai-Mai groups and allegedly backed by Uganda and Rwanda — seized a large swathe of territory in eastern Zaire from the Zairean army and allied Rwandan Hutu militia fighters late last year.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees who had been held by the Rwandan Hutu militia returned to Rwanda last year following the fighting in eastern Zaire. But the UNHCR said in Nairobi Thursday that between 200,000 and 300,000 refugees remain in the region, mostly in the Lubutu and Shabunda regions.

And it warned they risk being caught in the middle of the new fighting.

Reporters in Kisangani have witnessed white mercenaries apparently working with the Zairean army.

According to the French daily Liberation, Friday, a Belgian called Christian Tavernier is leading a force of 280 mercenaries.

The paper said Mr. Tavernier, who is described as a friend of notorious French mercenary Bob Denard, had been in touch with advisers of French President Jacques Chirac and was in permanent contact with Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko, now convalescing on the French Riviera.

The report said Mr. Tavernier's mercenary force, said to include Serbs, Croats, Russians, Poles, Belgians, Italians and "a significant number of French" soldiers

of fortune, was financed by money from Kuwait.

Zaire has accused the country's eastern neighbours, Rwanda and Uganda, of supporting the rebels.

Rwanda admits to some links with the rebels but denies active support while Uganda admits it has sent troops into Zaire, but says the operations were aimed at hitting anti-Ugandan rebels based in Zairean territory.

The Zairean Defence Ministry statement Thursday said its operation to wrest back control of territory lost to the insurgents was a "just, legitimate war in defence of the integrity of the territory" of Zaire.

"Zairean forces are determined to carry out this war to the end and to reclaim territory at any price," Defence Minister Likulia Bolongo was quoted in the statement as saying.

facts covered up the full facts of the shootings.

The British government has however flatly rejected the calls for a fresh inquiry.

A Northern Ireland office spokesman said last week: "The events of Jan. 30, 1972 were fully investigated by the Widgery tribunal. There are no plans to set up a further inquiry."

He added that "anyone with new evidence should report it" to the Ulster police.

But the opposition Labour Party is showing hesitant support for a new probe. Eric Illsley, the party's spokesman on the Northern Ireland economy, said Monday he would "look at the report of Lord Widgery to see whether there is evidence available, evidence which perhaps was not available many years ago, to see whether another inquiry will be required."

The scar of Ulster's 'bloody Sunday' still open

LONDON (AFP) — Twenty five years after the British army shot dead 14 civilians here, the scar left by "bloody Sunday" is still kept open by renewed calls for an apology from the British government and alleged fresh evidence of the soldiers' guilt.

Many Catholics in this northwestern city are preparing to commemorate in the days ahead the deaths of their co-religionists on Jan. 30, 1972, one of the darkest days of northern Ireland's bitter history.

An illegal civil rights march was drawing to a close when paratroopers opened fire on the crowd after they had tried to make arrests. The troops maintained they themselves had first come under fire, but a subsequent inquiry led by Lord Chief Justice Widgery failed to establish that any of the victims were armed, nor

that the soldiers had been shot at.

The killings inflamed nationalist opinion on both sides of the Irish border, and two days later an angry mob burned down the British embassy in Dublin, the capital of the predominantly Catholic Irish republic.

The British government made out-of-court settlements with next of kin, but neither it nor the army have ever apologised for the deaths.

Relatives of the dead men last week called for a fresh inquiry into the killings after alleged new evidence was reported in the British and Irish media.

It had always been assumed the victims were hit from ground level as they took part in the civil rights march, but according to the new evidence, three were shot from above by soldiers on duty on the city's historic walls.

The soldiers claim they were fired on, according to a local radio Ham who overheard transmissions between soldiers on duty and whose recording has been handed over to journalists.

A tape of the radio conversations of the soldiers on duty on the town walls was ruled inadmissible as evidence at the Widgery inquiry.

A new book on the killings out this month by Don Mullan, an eyewitness of the events, also claims three of the victims were shot from the town walls.

Mr. Mullan backs up his claims with medical evidence which he says shows the trajectory line of the bullets in each case was downwards at a 45 degree angle.

His book also quotes official documents which add weight to his belief that successive govern-

Amnesty criticises U.N. over African refugee crisis

NAIROBI (AFP) — Amnesty International Friday criticised the United Nations refugee agency as failing to prevent forced repatriation of refugees in Africa's Great Lakes region.

The criticism of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) follows a massacre by Burundian soldiers earlier this month of more than 100 Burundian refugees reportedly expelled from Tanzania.

"The UNHCR and the international community have often failed to make immediate and unequivocal protests against such expulsions," an Amnesty International statement received here said.

The statement, prepared by an Amnesty delegation visiting Tanzania, also accused the international community of assuming that the refugees crisis in Central Africa was over.

"The reality is completely different (...) the crisis is in

danger of worsening. The situation remains perilous with refugees being attacked in their camps, and some being attacked and killed if they returned home," the statement quoted Flora MacDonald, the head of the Amnesty delegation in Tanzania as saying.

Tanzania and other countries in the region like Zaire host hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Hutus who fled their country during the 1994 ethnic massacres there.

Many returned from Zaire late last year when local Tutsi rebels routed Rwandan Hutu militia fighters who had controlled the refugees' camps.

But the UNHCR said in Nairobi Thursday that between 200,000 and 300,000 refugees remain in eastern Zaire and that they risk being caught up in new fighting as the Zairean army presses on offensive to win back rebel-held territory.

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Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
 مؤسسة الصحافة الأردنية
 Chairman of the Board of Directors: MAHMOUD AL KAYED
 Director General: MOHAMMAD AMAD
 Editor-in-Chief: GEORGE S. HAWATMEH
 Editorial and advertising offices: Jordan Press Foundation, University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.
 Telephones: 684311, 699634
 Telex: 21497 ALRAJ JO
 Facsimile: 696183
 The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times advertising department.

Ties from past to future

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein's talks with King Fahd in Riyadh after his trip to Mecca to perform the Umra are timely and propitious. Jordanian-Saudi relations have returned to normal after overcoming the tremendous strains caused by the Gulf crisis and war.

The current phase calls for more coordination and cooperation between the two key Arab states especially on the peace process with which we should be and are highly concerned. The recent breakthrough on Hebron between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), which was brokered to a considerable extent by the personal intervention of King Hussein at the eleventh hour, has ushered in a new era in regional ties and interaction which many observers now regard as an important step towards making real progress on all other tracks. Saudi Arabia's full understanding and appreciation of Jordan's efforts to bring about a comprehensive and lasting Middle East peace is definitely a crucial factor in trying to achieve that goal.

As King Hussein said on the eve of his pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi-Jordanian relations are both "strong and historic." The historic dimension of these ties are borne out by shared views on regional as well as bilateral issues, despite the differences that surfaced on ways to reverse the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Joint efforts should continue and deepen on the basis of mutual respect and appreciation of the sometimes different priorities and approaches that the two countries might have. Jordan looks as always for even better relations with Saudi Arabia. Those ties should be driven by a set of fundamentals that should ensure their continuation.

In this vein, the volume of trade and commerce between the two countries can grow to new and higher levels. But just as Jordan can benefit from the opening of the Saudi market to its goods, services and labour, Saudi Arabia can tap on Jordan's skilled and experienced manpower and take advantage of the competitive price and quality of Jordanian products.

Economic and pragmatic considerations will soon push the whole Arab region towards building more solid economic structures. The two neighbouring states are in a unique position to set an example which other Arab countries can follow as they pursue mutually rewarding economic relations which will, by necessity, extend to cooperation on energy, the environment, borders and security. These are issues which can only be addressed in a regional framework. Jordan and Saudi Arabia can take the lead in identifying and constructing that framework. Their weight, presence and respect in the region will ensure that their example is followed by other Arab states.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily described a recent visit of Jordanian ministers to Baghdad and their conclusion of agreements on trade and oil shipments between Iraq and Jordan as reflecting the strong ties binding the two brotherly countries. Regardless of the dark patches that marred bilateral relations in the past, Amman and Baghdad will remain committed to brotherly ties and to the pursuit of joint action for the benefit of the two peoples, said a columnist writing under the pen name Meem. President Saddam Hussein's meeting with the Jordanian ministers and his announcement that Iraq will provide additional quantities of oil to Jordan free of cost, in addition to the conclusion of the oil and trade protocols, provided sufficient proof of the strong and ever growing relations between the two sides, added the writer. The Jordanians and the Iraqis, he said, are bound by geographic and historic brotherly relations and Jordan serves as Iraq's gate to the Arab World while Iraq serves as Jordan's strategic depth, protecting its interests, said the writer. He said the two countries' recent agreements served as additional milestones on the road towards economic integration.

COMMENTING ON Israeli leaders' statements on their desire to reach a peace treaty with Syria, Al Ra'i said in an editorial that the peace process can be revived if Israel is willing to reach an accord with Syria on the full implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. The paper stressed that Israel must be made to realise that it has obligations and commitments to make if it is really and genuinely inclined towards peace with Damascus. Israel should first stop issuing hostile statements against Syria, claiming that the occupied Syrian heights are Israeli land, and the Israeli government must heed the resolutions of the Cairo Arab summit which demanded Israel's full withdrawal from the Syrian heights as a prerequisite for peace with Damascus, said the paper. It said that in addition, the United States, which is sponsoring the peace process, should prove its neutrality if it is to be a partner in the peacemaking process. The paper stressed that mere statements by Israeli leaders about peace can by no means achieve that goal without practical steps taken in that direction.

Jordanian Perspective

'If U.S. has a long-term vision, we can look forward to its forceful approach to the dynamics of the Mideast peace process'

By Dr. Musa Keilani

THE 99-0 vote with which the U.S. Senate confirmed Madeleine Albright as secretary of state in the second-term Clinton cabinet on Wednesday speaks volumes for the reputation she enjoys as perhaps the toughest American diplomat when it comes to defending U.S. interests around the globe.

Having been sworn in and assumed office 24 hours later, Ms. Albright automatically became part of the political life in the Middle East, given the close engagement of the Clinton administration in the Arab-Israeli peace process.

We do not know yet whether Ms. Albright has any new ideas to advance the Middle East peace process; if she does, then it would not be long before we can see their reflections.

We in Jordan, and elsewhere in the Arab World, were more used to seeing the tough side of Ms. Albright, during her tenure as Washington's permanent delegate to the United Nations, particularly her approach when it came to dealing with Iraq.

As such, she has taken over the State Department with the reputation, as many see it, of adopting an anti-Arab approach and many also naturally expect her to adopt a position that would not serve the Arab cause in the Middle East peace process.

But it is not necessarily true, just as the unfounded rumours that Ms. Albright is Jewish and, as such, she would be serving Israeli interests in the peace process.

For starters, let us take note that Ms. Albright's tough talking on Iraq and her consistent attacks on Saddam Hussein were in fact softer when compared with some of the Arab delegates at the United Nations.

Ms. Albright did not invent stories of her own that the Iraqi regime was building palaces after palaces when the people of Iraq were starving; she was drawing from information provided to her, accurate or otherwise, by her country's government and its intelligence machinery.

Ms. Albright was not drawing from her imagination that the human rights of the people of Iraq were being violated; such accounts were given to her, again accurate or otherwise, by the administration.

As such, an assumption that Ms. Albright has her own axe to grind against Iraq and Saddam Hussein would be completely misplaced.

The same also applies to her opposition to a second term for Egypt's Boutros Ghali as U.N. secretary general. It would be simply naive to believe that Ms. Albright led

a lone crusade against Mr. Ghali; she was told by Washington to veto a second term for the Egyptian diplomat.

So, where does a picture of Ms. Albright running a personal anti-Arab vendetta come from?

She was simply following orders from Washington. Of course the choice of words was hers, but that only proves one thing: Ms. Albright has a strong vocabulary that includes tough idioms and phrases and she drew from it extensively while doing her job as her country's representative, entrusted with conveying her country's ideas and positions to the world body.

For us in Jordan, the picture is largely clear: Ms. Albright's mandate as secretary of state is to defend American strategic political and economic interests and if she serves that objective in all honesty and dedication, then it is good news. For defending American strategic political and economic interests simply means taking a more objective position on the Middle East peace process, which indeed implies cutting down Israel to size.

"The U.S., the self-professed leader of the free world and champion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, is being forced to put up an armoured shield around it rather than keep its door open for the oppressed."

There is little doubt that the anti-U.S. sentiments that we see in many parts of the Arab World could be attributed directly to Washington's consistent political, military, material and moral support for Israel. It is also clear that such support has eroded respect for the U.S. as a honest mediator in the effort to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

By extension, that could also explain the many anti-U.S. attacks that we have seen since the 1980s in the Middle East region, including the two bombings in Saudi Arabia in the last nine months.

That leads us to observe the high state of alert and secu-

city that surrounds every American diplomatic mission and installation around the world, that clearly shows that a fortress mentality is setting in the American mind.

Indeed that is an irony. The U.S., the self-professed leader of the free world and champion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, is being forced to put up an armoured shield around it rather than keep its door open for the oppressed.

That is where the flaws and contradictions in the American policy are exposed. And it certainly does not give much reason for Americans to be proud of their country's record as the champion of the downtrodden.

Of course we cannot expect Ms. Albright to bring about sweeping changes to that policy. But her very mandate to defend her country's strategic interests around the world implies that she has to strive to shed the image acquired by Washington as the "guardian angel of Israel." Definitely that would mean telling Israel, regardless of who is in power there, that it cannot continue to occupy other people's land, flout international legitimacy and challenge world opinion by denying the legitimate territorial and political rights of others.

Washington's oft-heard argument that it could not simply pressure Israel into doing anything does not hold water. Israel does not have any legitimate rights to hold on to Arab territories. The American argument that Israel, as a sovereign, independent country, is free to do what protects its interests applies only to those lands and rights that the international community has accorded it. Definitely, the Palestinian territories, the Golan Heights and the so-called "security zone" in south Lebanon are not included in what the international community recognises as Israel's land and rights.

If anything, by continuing its role as patron of Israel, the U.S. is implicitly tarnishing its own image around the world.

In any context, maintaining the "strategic relationship" with Israel might suit the U.S. in the short term, say a decade or two, but it certainly does not serve Washington's medium- or long-term interests.

So, the key question is: Is Ms. Albright speaking with a long-term vision of what it implies when she says she would make the "American people proud" of her? If she does, and also means it, then we can definitely look forward to a forceful American approach to the dynamics of the Middle East peace process.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Conflict in Sudan is also about influence in the Nile, Red Sea region

REVIEWED BY ELIA NASRALLAH

AMONG THE topics covered prominently in the local press in the past week was the conflict in Sudan and its repercussions in the Arab World. Also given prominence were the ongoing massacres in Algeria, domestic affairs and the situation in the Middle East following Israel's redeployment of its forces in the Hebron region.

The present crisis in Sudan dates back to 1989 when the military assumed power in the country, banning all opposition political groups except for the Islamists, said Mahmoud Rimawi, a writer for Al Ra'i daily.

This policy has created internal tension because one party was allowed to flourish, at the expense of others which ran underground, said the writer.

This policy has antagonised Egypt which has accused Sudan of harbouring Islamist groups who have been active against the Egyptian government and other countries neighbouring Sudan, he said.

Now that the conflict has widened, with backing from the rebels from neighbouring Eritrea and Ethiopia, Egypt, along with the other concerned Arab countries, should intervene and prevent the disintegration of Sudan and bring about reconciliation among that country's various warring groups, demanded the writer.

A writer for Al Dustour accused Israel of being behind the conflict in Sudan, saying that the Jewish state, backed by the United States, is trying to impose its influence on the countries around the Red Sea and make them besiege Sudan and Egypt.

Yasser Zaitneh said that at least 800 Israeli military experts are organising the aggression, in collaboration with Ethiopia and Uganda, with financing from Washington.

He said that Israel and the United States aim at imposing their domination on the River Nile sources,

weaken Egypt and Sudan and impose their will on the eastern parts of Africa. The writer said that recent reports from France have revealed that the Israelis and the Americans have been providing weapons to the countries neighbouring Sudan to launch their aggression on that Arab country in order to achieve the U.S.-Zionist objectives.

Sultan Hattab, a writer for Al Ra'i, said the escalation of conflict in the Horn of Africa calls for an immediate intervention on the part of the Arab League.

Egypt, the largest Arab country with special responsibilities in the African region, should step in to stop the war and enable the warring factions to achieve peace and reconciliation, said the writer.

Sudan is an Arab country facing aggression from its neighbours and under no pretext should the Arab League refrain from undertaking a decisive action to put an end to the war and protect national interests, he said.

The writer said the Arab countries should not remain passive and watch Sudan face a tragedy similar to that which had befallen Iraq. Taher Adwan, a writer for Al Dustour, described the conflict in Sudan as an American war on that country and part of American plots to impose sanctions on the Sudanese.

The Americans want to impose their hegemony on the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea, converting it into an Israeli-American lake, and so they resorted to arming Sudan's neighbours to launch war on the Arab state, charged the writer.

He said the plot is also directed against Egypt, because U.S.-Israeli domination of the sources of the River Nile means control over the destiny of Egypt and Sudan.

What Sudan needs now is not statements of condemnation of the aggression but rather arms shipments to Khartoum to enable the Sudanese to repel aggression and protect the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, said the

writer. Reflecting on the situation in Algeria, following a spate of bombings that killed and injured hundreds of innocent civilians during the holy month of Ramadan, a writer for Al Ra'i said the crimes against the people in that country can by no means be justified or condoned, whatever their sources or perpetrators might be.

Mahmoud Rimawi said that no power struggle can justify the murder of innocent women and children and the massacre of people with no affiliation to political parties, the government or the armed forces.

The writer said that the crimes against humanity, which are committed almost daily in Algeria, can achieve nothing for the opposition groups which are behind the attacks and which have proved their brutality and barbaric nature.

The writer said that the Algerians are passing through ordeal and sufferings because an opposition group finds that bloodshed is a way to achieve its selfish objectives.

The Algerian opposition groups' claims that the Algerian armed forces and government are behind the brutal massacres committed in the country can deceive nobody, said Saleh Qallab, a writer for Al Dustour.

It is unreasonable for anyone in his right mind to believe these claims simply because the government cannot commit such atrocities which would bring its demise, stressed Saleh Qallab.

The writer said that the armed forces, which fought the French for years to achieve independence in Algeria, can by no means be responsible for the massacre of women and children.

These crimes are committed by extremist groups who have lost their sense of direction and are acting as agents in the pay of foreign powers bent on ruining Algeria, charged the writer.

He said that the groups behind the murder of

women, children and innocent civilians have only one objective in mind: to assume power in the country at all cost.

Taher Adwan said it is too late for the present parliament to enact a new elections law, to replace the one-person, one-vote system, because parliament is now in its last session.

Because the government has so far failed to present to the house a new draft elections law, and is unlikely to do so during the present session, at least the present parliament can introduce amendments to the existing law, he demanded.

The one-person, one-vote system is undemocratic and so is any extension of the present parliament which was elected on the strength of the existing voting system, said the writer.

As the government seems to be determined to carry out the parliamentary elections this year on the basis of the one-person, one-vote system, he said, the only way for parliament to ensure somewhat fair elections lies in the introduction of amendments to the present law.

In the face of worldwide support for the Israeli-Palestinian accord on the redeployment of Israeli forces in the Hebron area, only Syria, backed by extremist Palestinian groups, stood as opponent to the deal, said Fahed Fanek, a writer for Al Ra'i.

Had the Palestinians and Israelis not reached this accord, the whole Middle East peace process could have been ruined, added the writer.

His Majesty King Hussein's efforts to break the deadlock have succeeded in reviving the peace process which, said the writer, has proved to be stronger than the extremists' will to ruin it.

The writer said that the peace process could be delayed by Israel for some time, but it can by no means be destroyed since the peace camp has proved to be stronger and more determined to pursue endeavours to achieve the aspired objective.

Uncertainty stalks Chechnya on eve of elections

GROZNY, Russia (R) — A light flickers in the darkness at the end of a muddy track, hesitant but unmistakable — the only neon for miles around.

This is Grozny's sauna — a tiny oasis of relative comfort and calm in the desolate, war-torn Chechen capital.

"Customers still come, though we get fewer now because people don't have much money. More would come if we could guarantee the water supply," said Timur Ibrahimov, who runs the small but cosy bath-house on the outskirts of the city.

Nearly five months after a peace deal between Russia and Chechnya's pro-independence rebels halted fierce fighting in the southern region, water and electricity supplies remain erratic and most of the local economy is in ruins.

"Some people come here because they don't have water at home," said Mr. Ibrahimov. With most cafés, restaurants and theatres nothing more than piles of rubble, the sauna is one of the few places where young Chechens can go to relax.

It does not make much of a profit but covers its running costs — no mean business feat by current Chechen standards.

Elsewhere the picture is a lot gloomier. "Everything has been destroyed. Communications, basic infrastructure — it is all in ruins," said Tim Guldinann of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which is helping to organise elections in Chechnya on Jan. 27.

Few telephones work, most factories and farms are at a standstill and local people put unemployment at 80 to 90 per cent. There are no official statistics for the jobsless.

The few with regular jobs say they have not been paid for months — sometimes for nearly a year. People survive by trading — buying cheaply and selling at a small premium.

"The Chechens have always been good at trading. Look at the bazaar, it is the only place where the economy is still alive," said Aslan Dukayev, a professor at Grozny University.

Most of the government's tax revenues come from there, said Mr. Dukayev, who also has not been paid for months. But even in the bustling, well-stocked bazaar, traders say business has been much

slower since the fighting stopped. During the 21-month conflict Russian troops and federal government money helped keep the local economy afloat.

Now the Russians have gone as part of the peace deal and uncertainty is paralysing economic activity.

"Whoever gets elected (as president), people must be paid or else things will never get better," said one woman selling pens and stationery in the bazaar.

The political outlook also remains unclear. Chechnya barely has a functioning government and eyes are fixed on the election, which will choose a new president and parliament.

Chechnya's very status is ambiguous. The five main presidential candidates regard Chechen independence as a fait accompli, despite the peace deal's requirement that the region's final political status be deferred for five years.

The Kremlin failed to defeat the rebels militarily, but Moscow still hopes to persuade Chechnya to stay within the Russian Federation, possibly with financial inducements.

The election campaign is full of anti-Moscow rhetoric, but more thoughtful Chechens say the successful candidate will have to show flexibility in his dealings with the Russians. "Only Russian money can restart the economy in the absence of willing foreign investors," said Mr. Dukayev. "Russia will use the economy as a lever."

Another key issue is what to do with the thousands of still armed but unemployed fighters, many of them too young to have lived as adults in a normal peaceful society.

"There is a lost generation here due to the war. It is going to be very hard integrating them into civil society. They are looking for a new identity," said the OSCE's Guldinann.

He said failure to stabilise the economy and provide new incentives for these men could drive them towards more radical ideologies, including Islamic fundamentalism.

Rebel commander Shamil Basayev, now one of the frontrunners in the presidential race, has accused Chechnya's interim government of abandoning the independence fighters.

New
Liby
with

UNITED NATIONS

Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi thumbed his nose at the United Nations at Washington last week when a Libyan jet landed in Accra despite a U.N. air embargo on Libya. Tripoli's official agency JANA reported that a Libyan Arab Airlines plane flew to Accra last Thursday. Tripoli in defiance of the U.N. air embargo imposed on Libya in April 1992.

The news came just as a new U.N. chief, Annan of Ghana, met U.S. President Bill Clinton in Washington.

The United States quickly called the flight a "serious violation" of the embargo.

State Department spokesman, Nicholas B. Spillane, said: "We will pursue the matter in the U.N. Security Council and in the various committees at the U.N. who are at that Libya 'ought to be' by U.N. Security Council resolutions."

U.S. as
Saudi

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Janet Reno has backed off her statement that FBI Freeh's statement that withholding crucial evidence of the deadly bombing last June.

"As Director Freeh said Wednesday, we have some very important issues, obtain the appropriate steps that we need to provide information to our ability to make findings or to channel the investigation in the right directions."

The two U.S. officials' shift in U.S. policy which praise for Saudi Arabia, those responsible for the military housing complex near Dhahran which killed 27 U.S. servicemen. Asked if she thought hampering U.S. investigation, Mr. Reno said it was investigation to have found order to assess what taken."

U.S. officials quoted

Fujimori
as Lima

LIMA (Agencies) — Fujimori has vowed to oust the Japanese group holding 7 Japanese ambassadors' release once the crisis was over. "This is not going to go Fujimori said in La Paz, looking for the total eradication in the region," he said. Fujimori's Revolutionary MRTA).

Speaking with reporters with Bolivian President Sanchez de Lozada, Mr. Fujimori would not let up in his fight against the claimed rebel groups in Peru.

"There is no going back to hunt them down," he said. Mr. Fujimori's threatened police tactics over that have steadily tightened the defiant MRTA rebels.

On Thursday, four captives were taken to the entrances and a small hole by service staff. Watched by policemen, the labourers hour making wooden planks access points.

The action left open a that has been used by MRTA mediators and freed captives. A police helicopter also landed and bobby-trapped times.

The MRTA responded to the latest move on the part of Fujimori as a "massacre" by the government.

"We have to stop the diet not have to suffer five years," new MRTA communiqué. A second communiqué police activities were "p"

Arab cash aid tops \$100 billion

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Financial aid provided by Saudi Arabia and other Arab oil producers has exceeded \$100 billion but the flow of assistance is still slowing down, an official report showed Thursday.

The assistance, mostly to fellow Arab countries and other developing nations, totalled around \$103 billion between 1970 and 1995, the Arab League said in its 1996 annual economic and social report.

Saudi Arabia emerged as the top donor, accounting for 64 per cent of the total Arab aid. About 16 per cent was provided by Kuwait, 11 per cent by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the rest by Iraq, Libya and Algeria.

In 1995, Arab aid stood at \$1.23 billion compared with nearly \$1.41 billion the previous year. Most of the funds were provided by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE, which control nearly 45 per cent of the world's oil.

The 1995 aid was far lower than assistance provided during the oil boom of late 1970s and early 1980s, when it averaged more than \$7 billion a year, according to the report, carried by the official UAE news agency WAM.

"The Arab aid flow started to decline in the second half of 1980s and continued its decline later because of a sharp drop in crude oil prices and growing political and economic needs by the donors," said the report.

It is to be released soon in full by the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund (AMF).

The report gave no breakdown but figures obtained from the AMF showed Arab financial assistance peaked at \$64.5 billion between 1975 and 1984. It plunged to around \$29.5 billion between 1985 and 1995.

There were no figures for 1996 but AMF sources said they expect the size of the aid to be equivalent to the 1995 level despite an increase of more than \$3 a barrel in oil prices last year.

They cited growing development commitments in donor nations, especially in the Gulf, where most countries are carrying out reforms to tackle persistent budget deficits and repair economic damage caused by the oil price decline.

The main beneficiaries of the Arab aid in the region were Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Syria, Jordan and the Palestinians.

"You do not expect our countries to keep the same size of aid that they were providing during the oil boom," a UAE official said.

Despite the improvement in oil prices in the past two years, figures show that the GCC's oil revenues remained less than half their level in 1980, when they stood at nearly \$180 billion.

"Another factor is the growing development needs due to the large increase in the population," the official added.

The decline in Gulf aid to poor Arab states has hurt their economies as they heavily depended on the cash assistance and remittances from their expatriates in the Gulf.

But it was also a key factor that has forced those countries to embark on reforms to heal their economic woes.

"The Arab aid is still considered high in international standards if they are compared to the gross domestic product," the Arab economic report said. Arab donors have continued providing aid although they are classified as developing nations and their main source of income, oil, is a depletable source.

"Between 1990 and 1994, they offered around four per cent of their total oil revenues in loans and other development aid," the report added.

The report showed financial aid provided to Arab states by all sources totalled \$55.4 billion between 1988 and 1994. The energy sector had the lion's share of 28 per cent, followed by communications, industry and farming.

Dollar breaks above 120 yen in Tokyo trade

TOKYO (AFP) — The dollar broke above 120 yen in late afternoon trading here Friday to reach a 47-month high, driven in part by an apparent lack of concern by Japan towards a weaker yen, dealers said.

The dollar hit 120.04 yen at 3:58 p.m. (0658 GMT) and reached a high of 120.20 yen before falling back to trade at 119.94-97 yen at 5 p.m. (0800 GMT), well clear of its intraday low of 118.32.

Dealers said remarks by senior Japanese government officials the weaker yen would not have an adverse impact on the economy and was in fact lending assistance to the recovery drove the dollar upwards.

A dealer at a major Japanese bank denied a report that the Bank of Japan had stepped into the market after the dollar broke 120 yen to sell dollars for yen for the first time in four-and-a-half years.

"I don't think the Bank of Japan is in the market," he said of an uncorroborated report by Japan Broadcasting Corp. The central bank was in the market.

But another dealer said: "The Bank of Japan could have intervened — there's no way to really tell — because I felt selling pressure on the dollar when it topped 120."

The last time the dollar traded above the 120 yen level was Feb. 18, 1993, sliding towards a record low 79.75 on April 19, 1995.

Dealers said comments

by Bank of Japan Research and Statistics Bureau Director General Masayuki Matsushima and Economic Planning Agency Vice Minister Shinpei Nukaya earlier appeared to support a strong dollar.

Mr. Matsushima told reporters during a briefing on the central bank's quarterly economic report that the yen's decline had helped the economy extend its modest growth and was expected to help sustain growth.

"The yen's fall, so far, from the 80-yen level has been a plus for the Japanese economy and it is expected to continue to work as a positive factor for growth," Mr. Matsushima said.

He said the yen's decline had helped to stem sustained falls in net exports and helped accelerate the pace of growth of domestic exports.

Mr. Nukaya earlier told a regular news conference that domestic prices had yet to show upward pressure following the yen's slide against the dollar, echoing comments of recent days there had been no adverse economic impact.

Tatsuya Hyodo, assistant general manager at Sanwa Bank's treasury department, said that fundamental differences between the economies of the United States and Japan were underpinning the dollar's gains.

"Since the run of the year, expectations that a gap between U.S. and

Japanese interest rates will widen has been growing," Mr. Hyodo said.

"Speculators may be satisfied with the achievement of the 120 level, but I think the dollar will remain strong for a while," he said.

The U.S. and Japanese economies are as different as heaven and hell.

"Japanese investors are pinning no hope on stocks, and are fed up with bond buying. So, they're investing in the United States and fund flows overseas are accelerating," Mr. Hyodo said.

A dealer from a European bank who asked not to be named said: "The dollar's strength has been supported by fundamental differences between the U.S. and Japanese economies."

"Another factor is the big gap between American and Japanese interest rates," he said. "Japanese rates are staying at low levels because of gloomy prospects for the future. On the other hand, U.S. interest rates may rise, or at least will not fall."

The dealer said that the 120 yen level was "a major point of psychological resistance" and the dollar "may rise further toward 125 yen if it clearly climbs above 120."

The Bank of Japan's Matsushima declined to elaborate on the level at which the yen's decline was positive for the economy, but said: "One thing that is clear is that the private sector has not factored in the yen's level at 119 yen in their business plans."

REUTERS

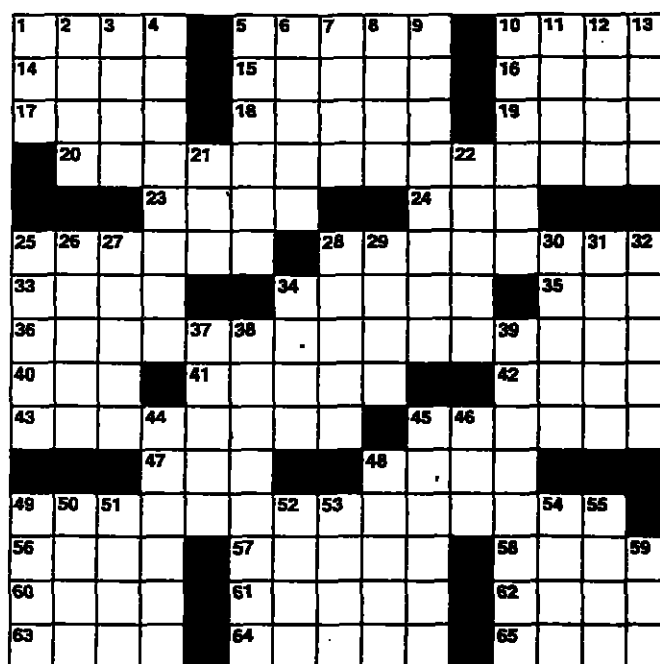
REUTERS

The Business of Information

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

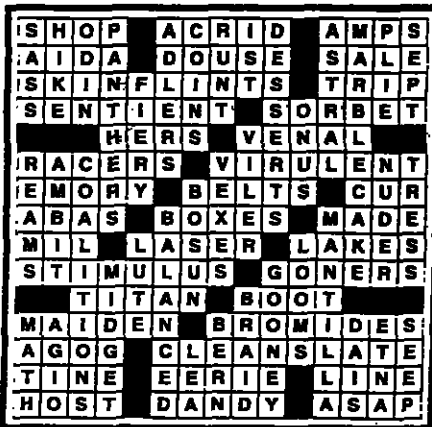
- 1 Jumble
- 5 Strikebreakers
- 10 Unadorned
- 14 Off-shore
- 15 French landscape painter
- 16 Nichols' hero
- 17 Prenuptial party
- 18 — acid
- 19 Horse color
- 20 Star of 49A
- 23 Spike and Bruce
- 24 Shoe width
- 25 Mushrooms
- 28 Deadlock
- 33 Copycat
- 34 NY county
- 35 TV actor, Gulager
- 36 Resident of Cabot Cove
- 40 Cinnabar, e.g.
- 41 Vanna of TV
- 42 Film spool
- 43 Unfair treatments
- 45 Turns inside out
- 47 Swiss canton
- 48 First man
- 49 Long-running TV series
- 56 Leaf-stem angle
- 57 Shearer, dancing actress
- 58 Blue color
- 60 Easy gait
- 61 Up and about
- 62 Inter —
- 63 Low card
- 64 — out (barely beat)
- 65 Gown material



by Bernice Gordon

DOWN

- 1 Possesses
- 2 The Charles' dog
- 3 Connery
- 4 They seek bargains
- 5 Climbs
- 6 States of unconsciousness
- 7 Seed cover
- 8 — hide
- 9 Very long time ago
- 10 Type of wire
- 11 Leigh Hunt character
- 12 Ananias
- 13 Gainsay
- 21 Conger
- 22 French lawmakers
- 25 Army officer
- 26 "Wozeck," e.g.
- 27 Baste again
- 28 Examines carefully
- 29 Enameled metalware
- 30 Yellow pigment
- 31 Armada
- 32 Rolls up
- 34 Follow
- 37 "If — King" (old film)
- 38 Board V.I.P.
- 39 Old violins
- 44 A Moore
- 45 Name of many English kings
- 46 Different spelling; abbr.
- 48 High nest
- 49 Lager ingredient
- 50 Caesar's wife
- 51 Ready for the plucking
- 52 Fair
- 53 Successes
- 54 Bones of the ankle
- 55 Maleficent
- 59 Talk persistently



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Yassen for fashion factory continues its expansion

After many years of establishing his factory for fashion in Zarka's Free Zone, Mr. Mahmoud Yassen, the well-known Jordanian industrialist continues to expand his business inside and outside of Jordan.

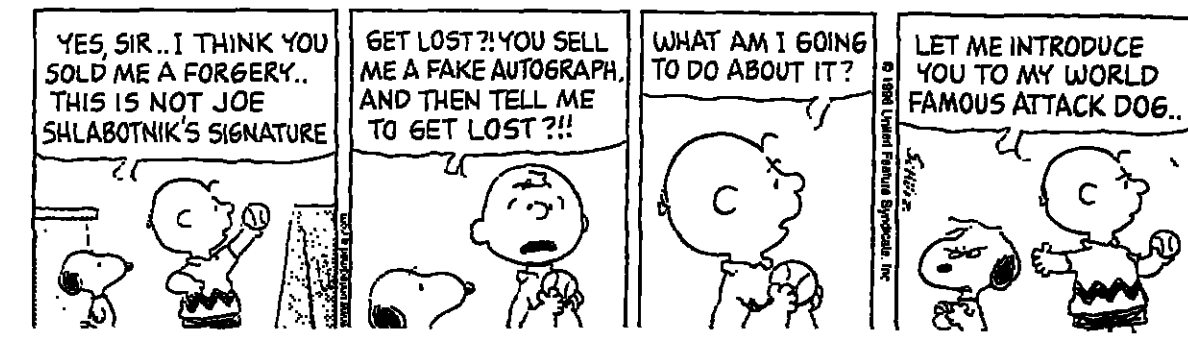
Recently, and after the successful opening of his showroom in Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A. Mr. Yassen opened a showroom in Amman (Gardens St., Hilwat Al-Mansour Bldg.). Yassen factory produces men's, women's and children's clothes which are

famous of its quality, fit and efficiency. Men's suits, in particular, are made of American wool and silk. They are styled after European designs and manufactured under the supervision of highly experienced tailors.

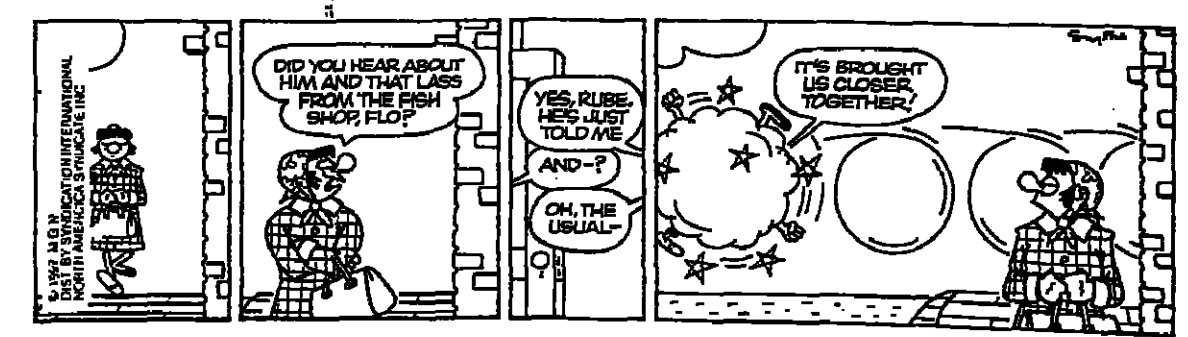
"Our products can compete easily with any imported clothes," Mr. Yassen said. "It's only that they are lower in prices, but also that they are, honestly speaking, better in quality," he added.

JORDAN TIMES
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684311 — 699634

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Cut down on tensions at career activities by getting your tasks done efficiently and pleasing fellow associates. Later this evening, finish some simplistic, and also quite pleasurable task which won't be too stressful.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Pursue your wishes this afternoon today, however, find some amusements with close friends — this evening. Watch your weight, since it could really affect your health. Drive carefully while on the highway.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You have several options today for gaining a personal wish, so consider your choice carefully. Be more independent and try not to ask favours of your friends or there could be difficulty arising in the days ahead.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Avoid any "flighty" company this evening. Be with people who are more practical minded and know what they are doing. Plan today how to gain personal goals and thereby you can gain success in the days ahead.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Get to the core of any career activities you have to handle today which is important to your welfare. A smile will go along way if you deal with a superior. Relax and enjoy tonight, with your loved ones and prepare for the days ahead.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) New contacts should be greeted nicely today since they can be of help to you in the days ahead. Listen carefully to their views and use any suggestions made. Try to cut down pre-judgements to a minimum.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Give some thought to notices which need to be sent out today, and be sure they are accurate so that won't be any misunderstandings. Be careful of little annoyances later this evening when dealing with your mate.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Be sure you know what you will say today before having a discussion with someone whose ideas are radically different from your own. Take along a close friend for support and prevent any difficulties.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you're confused about the direction to take today, consult an expert for advice. Settle matters with a fellow associate in a friendly way to prevent any difficulty. If you put your two heads together, you'll win.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Don't let some unimportant person or matter distract you from seeking out an entertainment you enjoy. Be careful while driving on the highway today and later tonight and thereby avoid any accident.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) If you handle your duties wisely today, your kin will be most pleased and feel more secure about you in the days ahead. This is a good day to entertain at home, so invite some guests and enjoy their company.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You can benefit greatly from a new acquaintance who is quite popular, so be friendly. Handle any routines carefully later this evening, and avoid doing any damage while driving on the highway.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz.

Major Currencies & Cross Rates		Prices as at 24/01/97 21:33	
		USD	JPY
US Dollar		1.6290	140.60
DF Mark		0.6139	73.16
GB Sterling		0.7772	82.76
CH Franc		0.7112	115.74
JP Yen		0.0084	136.50
CA Dollar		0.7417	122.57
IT Lira		0.0006	102.42
NL Guilder		0.5469	89.07
FR Franc		0.1820	0.2963

Energy	
Brent	23.55
W. Texas	23.95
Bony	23.55
Dubai	23.42
U.L. Gas	207.00

Mid-East Currencies	
SA Rial	0.2667
AE Dirham	0.2724
KW Dinar	3.3140
BH Dinar	0.3770
CY Pound	2.0357

Metal Prices	
Gold (oz's)	352.8
Silver (oz's)	4.94
Platinum (oz's)	357.65
AL (3 Months)	1637
CU (3 Months)	2243
Zinc (3 Months)	1135
Lead (3 Months)	698
Ni (3 Months)	7270

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)	
Period	1 3 6 9 12
USD	5.37 5.56 5.62 5.65 5.78
GBP	6.12 6.25 6.36 6.46 6.75
JPY	0.50 0.29 0.32 0.31 0.63
DEM	2.91 3.03 3.03 3.01 3.08
FRF	3.25 3.25 3.23 3.25 3.25
CHF	1.56 1.56 1.53 1.62 1.68
ITL	7.27 7.08 6.77 6.63 6.36

Main Equity Indices	
Index	Value
New York	6708.41
S&P 500	772.96
London	4218.8
Nikkei 225	17689.36
Paris	2430.34
Frankfurt	2998.24

Energy	
Coffee (libra)	144.33
Cocoa (libra)	1273
Sugar (libra)	298.8
Wheat (libra)	132
Soy (libra)	22.7
Tea (libra)	115
Barley (libra)	2.15
Rice (libra)	470

JOD Cross Rates	
Currency	Buy Sell
US Dollar	0.708 0.710
GB Sterling	1.15 1.158
DE Mark	0.4314 0.4336
CH Franc	0.4961 0.4978
FR Franc	0.1278 0.1284
JP Yen	0.5933 0.5963
NL Guilder	0.3241 0.326
IT Lira	0.4428 0.445

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

Graf on her way to Tokyo as father convicted of tax evasion

MELBOURNE (Agencies) — Steffi Graf was on a flight to Tokyo late Friday as news reached here of her father's imprisonment in Germany on tax evasion charges.

The World No.1 women's player had been recovering here from injury and illness after her shock defeat in the fourth round of the Australian tennis Open here last Sunday.

A Women's Tennis Association (WTA) spokesperson said Steffi had left on an evening flight for Tokyo where she will be competing in next week's Toray Pan Pacific Open.

She was expected to arrive in Tokyo early Saturday.

Peter Graf, 58, was sentenced to three years nine months' imprisonment in a Mannheim court in Germany on tax evasion charges.

It was not immediately clear how long he would have to spend in prison as he has already

spent 15 months in investigative custody while the probe into the family tax affairs was taking place.

Prosecutors had demanded a jail term of six years and nine months for Graf.

They accused him and a family tax adviser of evading 19.2 million marks (\$11.7 million at current exchange rates) in tax on Steffi's income between 1989 and 1993.

Had Steffi Graf still been in the Australian Open she would have played in the singles final Saturday.

Steffi was advised to rest at her Melbourne apartment to recuperate from an infected toe and a heat-related illness.

The World No.1 was dumped from the Australian Open by the 12th seeded south African Amanda Coetzer in oppressive heat in her earliest exit here since her early years on the

tour in 1983-84.

"I've been staying in, pretty much letting myself recover," 27-year-old Graf said in a statement released by the WTA.

"The doctor's orders were to rest and that's what I've been doing."

"I'm not the type that likes to be inactive, but in this case it was necessary."

Graf said she had been taking antibiotics for the infected toe.

"I have had a fever that we thought was due to the toe, but they think now that it may not have been related. I just may have picked up a virus somewhere."

Graf's defeat to the tenacious Coetzer ended an unbeaten run of 45 Grand Slam matches in which she had won six Grand Slams.



Vancouver Grizzlies forward Roy Rogers (L) tips the ball away from Denver Nuggets forward Antonio McDyess during the first quarter in Denver. Rogers stopped the pass, but hit the ball out of bounds (Reuters photo)

Hardaway sends Stoudamire a lesson as Heat beat Raptors

TORONTO (R) — Tim Hardaway scored 26 points and sent a message to Toronto's second-year guard Damon Stoudamire as the Miami Heat beat the Raptors 99-87 Thursday.

Sasha Danilovic added 16 and he and Hardaway combined for 11 points during a key run spanning the third and fourth quarters as the Heat continued their strong play on the road, winning for the fifth time in their last six games and pushing their record away from home to 20-5, best in the NBA.

Walt Williams had 23 points for Toronto and has 56 in his last two games. Stoudamire added 22 and 11 assists, but was bothered by Hardaway's defence, hitting just 7-of-20 shots.

For Hardaway, the game meant a little more than usual after Stoudamire criticized his ability in a published report.

"I wanted to make a statement," Hardaway said. "I went at Damon a little bit harder. In the first half I pressed a little too hard but in the second half I just took it to him."

"We made a couple of mistakes and they made us pay," Stoudamire said. "They are a good ballclub and every time we had a let-down they capitalized. Turn played well, but I wasn't guarding him. When I was on him, I thought I played him well."

The game was the 17th straight in which the Heat have held an opponent under 100 points and the 23rd time in 41 games that Miami has held a foe under 90.

At Cleveland, Michael Jordan scored 13 of his 32 points in the fourth quarter and keyed a 19-4 run that blew the game open as the Chicago Bulls defeated the Cavaliers 87-71.

"It was a hard-fought win," Jordan said. "We were able to hold them off in the second half and I was able to get some easy baskets in the fourth quarter."

Jordan made 10-of-24 shots and was 11-of-12 from the foul line following his 51-point effort Tuesday against New York.

Terrell Brandon scored all of his 21 points in the first three quarters and Chris Mills added 20 for the Cavaliers, who have dropped eight of their last nine.

In Anaheim, Darrick Martin scored 31 points, including three free throws with 16.2 seconds left that put Los Angeles ahead to stay, and the Clippers held on for their first win over the Seattle SuperSonics in nearly three years, 102-100.

Malik Sealy added 21 points for Los Angeles, which broke a 14-game losing streak against the SuperSonics, beating them for the first time since January 25, 1994.

The loss also ended Seattle's overall nine-game winning streak. Shawn Kemp had 26 points and 11 rebounds and Gary Payton

added 22 points before being ejected in the final seconds for the Sonics, who lost for just the third time in 17 games.

The Clippers scored the game's final six points.

In Houston, Sam Mack, starting for the ailing Mario Elie, scored a season-high 20 points as the Rockets raced to a 16-point halftime lead and held off the New Jersey Nets 111-106.

Hakeem Olajuwon and Clyde Drexler added 20 points apiece for Houston, which won for the fifth time in six games. The Rockets posted their eighth straight win over the Nets.

Olajuwon, who also had 10 rebounds, fell two assists shy of a triple-double as he and Drexler each had eight assists.

Kevin Willis added 16 points and 15 rebounds for the Rockets, who, were, without Elie and forward Charles Barkley. Elie had the flu, while Barkley missed his fourth straight game with a sprained right ankle.

At Indiana, Patrick Ewing scored 23 points, including the go-ahead basket with 17 seconds remaining, as the New York Knicks averted a Reggie Miller-led comeback and defeated the Pacers 92-90.

Chris Childs had 16 points and eight assists for the Knicks, who have won 17 of the last 21 regular-season meetings with Indiana.

Travis Best finished with 22 points and Miller scored 10 of his 21 in the fourth quarter for the Pacers.

In Orlando, Derek Strong scored eight of his 14 points in the final four minutes and grabbed 11 rebounds as the Magic beat the Milwaukee Bucks 96-92.

Penny Hardaway and Rony Seikaly had 23 apiece for Orlando, which won for the sixth time in seven games. The Magic, who lost the first two games with the Bucks this season, beat them for the 10th time in the last 13 meetings.

Tom Gugliotta scored a season-high 33 points as the Minnesota Timberwolves won for the first time in Vancouver, defeating the Grizzlies 95-76.

Gugliotta, who scored 18 points on 9-of-11 shooting in the first quarter, also grabbed 15 rebounds.

At Golden State, Terry Mills had 22 points and Lindsey Hunter added 19 as the Detroit Pistons snapped a modest two-game slide by routing the Warriors 94-79.

Latrell Sprewell led Golden State with 18 points and Donyell Marshall and Joe Smith added 17 apiece.

Zurbriggen and Kostner in dead heat

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO (R) — Switzerland's Heidi Zurbriggen won her second women's World Cup Alpine skiing downhill of the season on Friday but she had to share the victory with Italy's Isolde Kostner.

The two women clocked identical times of one minute 30.81 seconds down the 2,490-metre Olympia Delle Tofane Piste.

Germany's Katja Seizinger, winner of the first downhill of the season in Lake Louise, was third in one of the closest finishes ever, two hundredths of a second behind.

It was only the sixth time in World Cup history that a race had been tied and, curiously, the last such occurrence was on the same Cortina Piste in a women's Super-G in 1994.

Kostner, who won one of two downhills here last year, started immediately after Zurbriggen and was 0.36 seconds ahead at the first intermediate timing but then faded.

She was 0.08 ahead at the second intermediate. Zurbriggen, sister of former world and Olympic champion Pirmin, had won only once before — at Lillehammer last year —

going into this season but this was her second consecutive win in a month.

The veteran Swiss, who will be 30 in March, won the last, fog-hit downhill in bad Kleinkirchheim, Austria.

Friday's race was briefly halted after American Megan Gerety, the 16th starter, crashed heavily coming off a jump at high speed and careered into the safety netting.

Gerety got to her feet after the accident and appeared to have escaped serious injury.



Russia's Warwara Zelenskaja is airborne as she passes a gate on her way to set the fastest time in the official practice for the women's World Cup Downhill. Zelenskaja clocked 1:31.24 ahead of Swiss Heidi Zurbriggen who clocked 1:31.29 (Reuters photo)

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Spor

Pictured are the Sydney, January 25 From (L to R) - chidna. The mase run-up to the 2000

Pierce's in

MELBOURNE (A) Mary Pierce will be the Australian women's final world ground sl new mobility.

Pierce blitzed th Australian 7-5, 6-1 semifinal to earn a the final against H nemer.

Coetzer is Pierc has partner and k well.

The French star the team she had in when she was a tached at Rolan and won the Austr

She played with in the tecter said.

It was his playi he is takin end. She's pla and long. She is "separated," said and victim. G German Anke H Lorenz the

Age Nationality Play World Ranking Highest Career Head-to-Head Hard Court H Grand Slam F Grand Slam W Career Earning Coach

Hing

MELBOURNE Swiss teenage Hing won 1 Grand Slam doe the Australian a new playfull den Hing has repeat ed final aga French on Saturd. Seven year-old who will be Hing's winner in m of the beat. Hing's playl throughout the maza and Natasha Zvereva. Hing's third seeds American pair Davenport and Riond could not Hing's unsucces at attempting to steet the away from Hing's a was a 6-2, 6-2 defeat. Hing's became youngest ever Wimbledon champion last year w

RENO DON NEW A REN & DON ANNOUNCES THE WIDE S FAMOUS QUALI BAHJAT GARDENS



Stoudamire beat Raptors

Michael Stoudamire of the Denver Nuggets beat the Toronto Raptors 101-87 in the first round of the NBA playoffs on Friday night. Stoudamire scored 22 points, including a clutch three-point shot in the fourth quarter to seal the victory. The Nuggets will face the Los Angeles Lakers in the second round.



Pictured are the Sydney 2000 Olympic's official mascots which were launched in Sydney, January 24. The mascots are modelled on three native Australian animals. From (L to R) "Ollie", the kookaburra, "Syd" the platypus and "Mille" the echidna. The mascots will be used as the centerpiece of Olympic promotions in the run-up to the 2000 Games (Reuters photo)

Pierce's power threatens Hingis in women's final today

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Mary Pierce will be a major threat to Martina Hingis in the Australian Open women's final with her powerful ground shots and new mobility. Amanda Coetzer said here Thursday. Pierce blitzed the South African 7-5, 6-1 in the semifinal to earn a place in the final against the Swiss teenager. Coetzer is Pierce's doubles partner and knows her well. The French star is back to the form she had in 1994-95 when she was a defeated finalist at Roland Garros and won the Australian title. "She played extremely well" in the semifinal, Coetzer said. Pierce "is playing aggressive, she is taking the ball early, she's playing deep and long. She is more concentrated," said her fourth round victim, fifth seeded German Anke Huber. Formerly the 1.80m (5ft

10 in) French baseliner was seen as a big-hitter but slow about the court. Pierce says she has worked to improve her footwork. "She moved pretty well today... and she picked quite a few balls," said Coetzer, who saw Pierce dash to the net to recover at least two difficult drop shots. Hingis is ranked fourth in the world while Pierce has slumped from a high of three down to the current 22. But the unseeded French-American goes into the final with a 3-0 record over the 16-year-old Swiss. And that means the 22-year-old Pierce will go confidently into the centre court decider, says Mary Joe Fernandez. Hingis dismissed the veteran American 6-1, 6-3 in the second semi-final. Pierce is the "type of player that really thrives on confidence. Once she gets confident she's very hard to stop," Coetzer warned. Fernandez thinks that Pierce hits "hard enough where she can hurt" Hingis. The American provided scant opposition to the stylish Swiss who, she said anticipates and moves very well. Hingis has become more focused and consistent in the past year, she said. Coetzer said Hingis — who she played in the Hopman Cup three weeks ago — is playing "extremely well." "She's taking the ball early and she's coming into the net a lot and she will definitely rush Mary a lot more than I did," she said. Pierce said she knew that Hingis liked pace and "handles pace very well." "She doesn't seem to like she'll get to the ball, but she is always there so not to underestimate her," she said.

Statistics for women finalists

Age	Martina Hingis	Mary Pierce
Nationality	16 Swiss	22 French
Plays	Right-handed	Right-handed
World Ranking	4	22
Highest Career Ranking	4	3
Head-To-Head	0	3
Hard Court Head To Head	0	3
Grand Slam Final W/L	1-1	1-1
Grand Slam W/L	25-8	60-17
Career Earnings	\$1.6 Million	\$2.34 Million
Coach	Melanie Molitor	Sven Groeneveld

Hingis wins doubles on way to singles final

MELBOURNE (R) — Swiss teenager Martina Hingis won her second Grand Slam doubles title at the Australian Open Friday in a playful demolition she hopes to repeat in the single's final against Mary Pierce on Saturday. Sixteen-year-old Hingis, who will become the youngest Grand Slam single's winner in modern tennis if she beats Pierce, beamed a playful smile throughout the match as she and Natasha Zvereva, from Belarus, buried the tournament's third seeds. American pair Lindsay Davenport and Lisa Raymond could not see the humour, unsuccessfully attempting to steer the ball away from Hingis on the way to a 6-2 6-2 defeat. Hingis became the youngest ever Wimbledon champion last year when

she and Helena Sukova won the doubles final. Hingis was aged just 15 years and 282 days. "I love to be here in front of all this crowd and it's just great to play here in Australia. Hopefully I have a good day tomorrow," Hingis shares \$180,000 in prize money for Friday's victory, but will collect a much fatter cheque if she beats unseeded Pierce, who was champion here in 1995. Australia's most successful doubles partnership, Mark Woodforde and Todd Woodbridge, earned a chance to grab their eighth Grand Slam doubles title on Friday when they won their semifinal. The top-seeded "woodies" beat American pair Rick Leach and Jonathan Stark in four sets 6-3 7-6 5-7 6-1. The Woodies are on a roll after a sensational year in

Australian Open Sampras storms past Muster into final

MELBOURNE (R) — World No. 1 Pete Sampras stormed into his 11th Grand Slam final on Friday with a straight-sets demolition of Austrian baseliner Thomas Muster at the Australian Open. The 25-year-old American played at his powerful best, serving strongly and returning almost everything fifth-seeded Muster could blast at him to win 6-1 7-6 6-3 in under two hours. "He doesn't give you many chances and if you don't take those you're going to lose," said Muster, who bowed in tribute to Sampras before the crowd followed with a standing ovation. It was one of the best per-

formances of Sampras's nine-year career, and one bound to strike fear into the heart of unseeded Spaniard Carlos Moya, who will meet Sampras in Sunday's final. Moya, who beat World No. 2 Michael Chang in the first men's semifinal on Thursday, had promised to watch the match from the air-conditioned comfort of his hotel bedroom. Sampras won the Australian Open in 1994 and was runner-up to Andre Agassi the following year. He has won eight Grand Slam titles — only the French Open has eluded him. Muster, the game's supreme baseliner, has won 40 of his 42 career titles on

clay and had been hungry to show his detractors that he could play with the best on a hardcourt surface. But Sampras closed him out of the match, serving 16 aces and changing pace and length to break Muster's rhythm. Muster said he had tried hard to crack Sampras's backhand, only to find the top seed really had no weak points. After a lightning first set lasting only 29 minutes, Muster fought his way back into the match in the second set. Chasing every ball and hitting with heavy topspin, he broke Sampras's serve in the sixth game and built up a 5-2 lead. Sampras broke him in the following game and went on to take a tie-break decider 7-3. The final set belonged to Sampras from start to finish, but the super-fit Muster never threw in the towel. At 0-3, Muster hit what looked like a winning ball sharply across the court only to see Sampras backhand it around the net post. "Play left-handed Pete," one fan shouted as Sampras charged past his opponent. Sampras missed one match point on Muster's serve at 5-2 but served out the match to love. After ousting World No. 4 Goran Ivanisevic in the quarter-finals on Tuesday, Muster revealed he was using a computer to analyse his opponents' game. But silicon-chip technology was of little use against Sampras at the top of his form. "The computer was good and it told me exactly the right things," said Muster. "But you have to make the shots." Moya's best chance in Sunday's final is that Sampras will be feeling the effects of having played two five-setters en route to the final. Sampras himself was keen not to underestimate his young opponent: "To beat Michael (Chang) in straight sets is not easy to do... He's pretty confident, he's got nothing to lose. It's going to be a good fight on Sunday."

Chang to persevere after coming up short again

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Michael Chang was preparing to pick himself up and try again after failing in his quest for another Grand Slam tennis title here Thursday. The second seeded American, a joint favourite with Pete Sampras to win this year's Australian title, was hammered in straight sets by super Spaniard Carlos Moya in a semifinal. For Chang it was the latest in a catalogue of missed opportunities for a Grand Slam title following up to his 1989 French Open triumph as a 17-year-old. It was a heavy defeat for Chang. Unseeded Moya swept to a 7-5, 6-2, 6-4 victory in two hours and six minutes. His opponent in

Sunday's final will be World No. 1 Pete Sampras who beat Austrian fifth seed Thomas Muster in the other semifinal (see separate story). Chang faced up to his questioners at his post-match press conference and said it would not deter him from regrouping and trying again, with the French Open in Paris in May his next objective. "Today is a disappointing day, but part of being a champion is being able to take the tough losses and being able to rebound from them," he said. "Everybody can take the winning; it's the times when you need to come back from matches like this." Chang said the leadup matches against Andrei

Medvedev and Marcelo Rios had taken something out of him. "I was a little bit fatigued. The match with Andrei was extremely hot that day and the match I played against Marcelo, although the temperature dropped, it was extremely humid. "But for the most part physical conditioning is not a very good excuse when you're playing here in Australia because you know that's part of tennis." Chang said it normally took him a day to get over his disappointment of a defeat at a Grand Slam.



Michael Chang of the U.S. sits in dejection after being defeated by Spain's Carlos Moya in their semi-final match at the Australian Open January 23. Moya won in straight sets 7-5 6-2 6-4 (Reuters photo)

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Sudan masses troops for counteroffensive

KHARTOUM (Agencies) — Sudan has massed troops in its eastern regions to prepare a counterattack against rebels occupying Sudanese border towns for the past fortnight, press reports said Friday.

The rebel National Democratic Alliance (NDA), bringing together the southern-based Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and northern opponents of Khartoum's Islamic regime, have seized an area of territory in eastern Sudan in an offensive begun this month.

Sudanese President Hassan Bashir said in remarks published on Friday that his forces were getting ready to "liberate" eastern Sudan from invading Ethiopian and Eritrean forces.

"The situation now is as follows: The initial attack from the Ethiopian and Eritrean forces has been contained, and our forces have stopped the advance of the enemy forces," General Bashir told the left-wing Beirut daily Al Safir.

"Now they are getting ready, after grouping, to push to liberate the land... every inch of the land."

Sudan says neighbouring Ethiopia and Eritrea have invaded eastern Sudan but the Sudanese opposition in exile say they are responsible for the attacks without foreign help.

Gen. Bashir said a new front may be opened with Uganda but that Khartoum

will not move militarily against its southern neighbour unless it attacked first.

"We do not rule out opening a front with Uganda, especially after the leaders of these three countries (Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda) met in London last Thursday to coordinate against Sudan," Gen. Bashir said.

"There are forces mobilised on the Ugandan side of the border, but we will not move against Uganda unless it begins with aggression," Gen. Bashir added.

On Thursday, Sudanese Information Minister Brigadier Al Tayeb Ibrahim Khair said that Khartoum was asking Uganda to stop a third front opening in the south.

Sudan has in the past said Uganda and Ethiopia have made cross-border raids in support of John Garang's SPLA, which has been fighting in the south since 1983. Uganda and Ethiopia, in turn, say the Sudanese government supports rebels fighting them.

"Now we are not confronting Garang, we are confronting a coalition guarded by Zionism, which directly supervises it," Gen. Bashir said.

He repeated his accusations that Washington was behind the fighting in Sudan.

The government mouthpiece Al Sudan Al Hadith on Friday reported Higher Education Minister Mujahid Ibrahim Ahmed Omar as saying that the Sudanese

people "are capable of liberating all Sudanese territories."

The newspaper said the minister was one of several who had joined troops and volunteer units along the frontline in the eastern Blue Nile state.

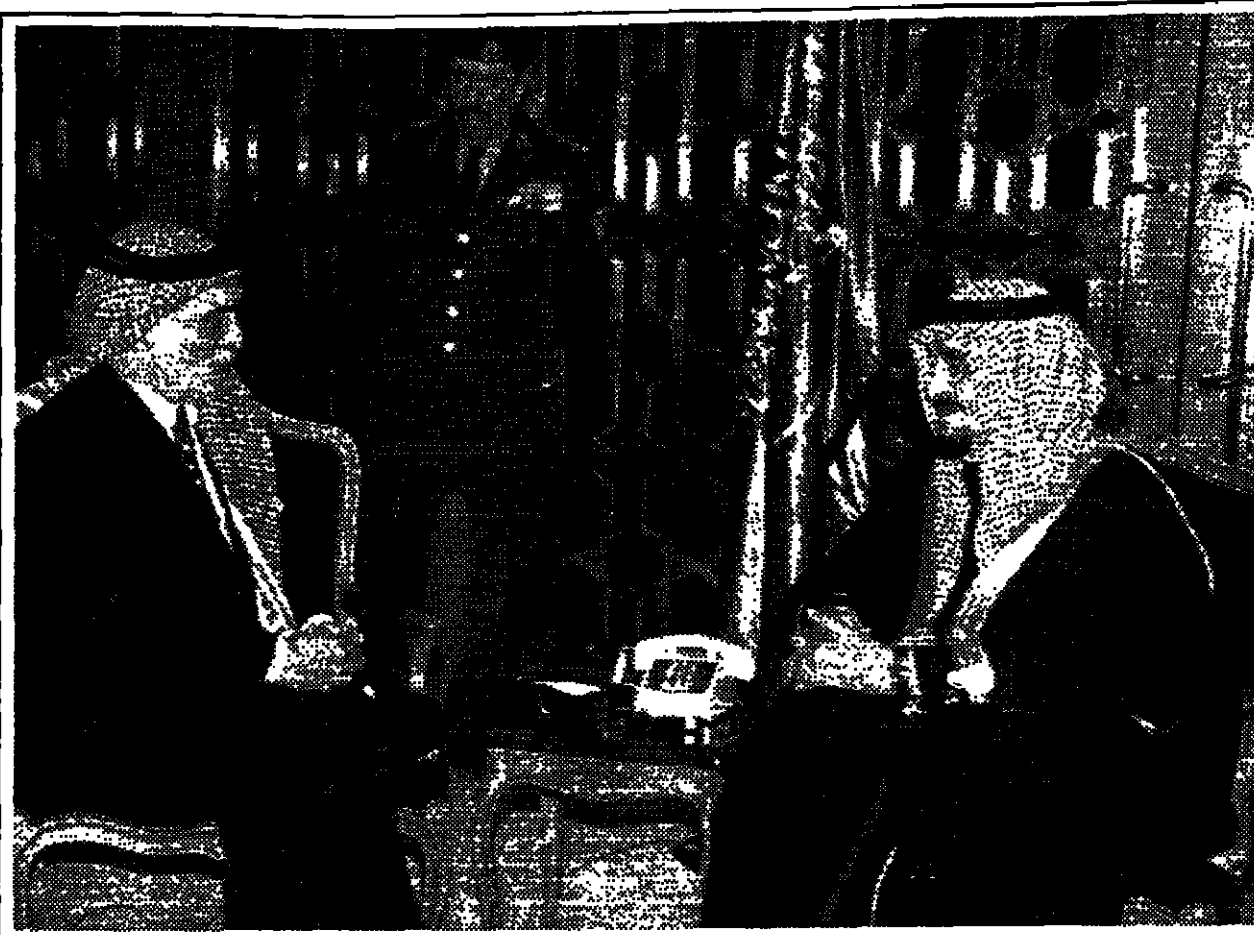
The daily, quoting what it called informed sources, also said a joint delegation of officials from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda had visited the rebel-occupied town of Kurmuk on Thursday, in the company of rebel leader Garang.

The paper said the visit was a "desperate attempt to rescue the Tigrean (Ethiopian) troops following strikes they were dealt by the (Sudanese) armed forces and popular defence."

It also quoted an unnamed political source as saying that the visit "demonstrates the proportion of the international conspiracy against Sudan and refutes the Ethiopian denial of involvement in attacks on Sudanese territories."

Sudan has been gripped by conflict since 1984, when the Garang's SPLA rose up to try and topple the Islamic regime in Khartoum and end the dominance of the Islamic north over the largely Christian and animist south.

Sudan Television on Friday showed footage of troops and civil defence recruits in the border area and reported that all routes to Kurmuk and Qassan and the surrounding territory were under their control.



JORDANIAN-SAUDI SUMMIT: His Majesty King Hussein and Saudi Arabia's King Fahd Ben Abdul Aziz hold talks in Riyadh on Thursday. King Hussein returned home on Friday after the visit to Saudi Arabia, where he also performed the Umra pilgrimage (see page 1) (Petra photo)

Arafat appoints former Hamas activist to his cabinet

HEBRON (AP) — In a move to draw support from his opposition, Yasser Arafat on Friday appointed a member of the Islamic Movement who once ran with the militant Hamas organisation, to serve as a minister in his cabinet.

Talal Sidr, a 44-year-old from Hebron, where Hamas, rather than Mr. Arafat's Fatah party, enjoys popular support, was sworn in as minister of youth in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Mr. Sidr, a former Hamas activist, was arrested three times by Israel in 1988 for activities related to the intifada, before he was deported to Lebanon in 1992 along with hundreds of other suspected militants.

The group was allowed to return after Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) signed the September 1993 Oslo peace agreement.

The appointment was announced by Mr. Arafat at a cabinet meeting in Hebron, the first session held there since 80 per cent of the city was turned over to Palestinian control following the recent Israel-PLO Hebron deal.

Mr. Sidr, who describes himself as a "son of the Islamic Movement," has been an outspoken opponent

of the Oslo accord but said that his views would not interfere with his post in the Palestinian cabinet.

"I am still against Oslo... But I can serve my own people," Mr. Sidr told the Associated Press. "We have to cooperate with (Arafat) and work together for building a homeland," he said.

The appointment is important for relations between Mr. Arafat and rival Palestinian factions who criticise the Palestinian leader for making agreements with Israel which fall short of creating full statehood.

"It is certainly important for Palestinian national unity," Labour Minister Samir Ghosheh said of the appointment.

Mr. Sidr no longer identifies himself directly with Hamas, the group that claimed responsibility for a series of suicide bombings last year that killed scores of Israelis and now works with the more religious Islamic Movement. Hamas sources in Hebron said the group, which rejects Israel-PLO peace making, quietly supports Mr. Sidr's appointment.

Wearing a dark suit and tie, Mr. Sidr placed his right hand on the Koran and pledged to work closely with Mr. Arafat and for the Palestinian people.

Beirut rejects Jordan's complaint over Iraqis

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon on Friday rejected a formal complaint from Jordan over its release of three Iraqi diplomats accused of killing an Iraqi opposition leader in Beirut three years ago.

The memorandum (of complaint) is unacceptable in both form and content. The Foreign Ministry will send Lebanon's reply to Jordan," said Foreign Minister Fares Bouez.

Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh summoned Lebanese Ambassador to Jordan William Habib last week to complain about the Lebanese court's decision to free the Iraqis.

"The freeing of criminals is a violation of Lebanon's engagement to fight terrorism and its commitment to justice," said the Jordanian memorandum to the Lebanese government.

Lebanese authorities announced Monday that Fares Kamel, Ali Sultan Darwish and Hadi Hassan Najm — held since 70-year-old Shiite Muslim opposition member Taleb Souheil was gunned down in April 1994 — would be released.

The judge in the case, Said Mirza, made the decision after receiving a

Foreign Ministry report confirming the three had diplomatic status.

The three Iraqis were freed on Thursday into the charge of the Lebanese security services, and they are expected to be expelled from Lebanon in the next few days, judicial sources said.

Souheil, who held Jordanian and Saudi passports, was a leading member of the London-based Council for a Free Iraq which opposes President Saddam Hussein.

One week after the killing, Beirut broke off diplomatic relations with Baghdad after the Iraqi authorities failed to lift the suspects' diplomatic immunity.

Shortly after the murder, Mr. Bouez said the diplomats had confessed their involvement and that they were intelligence agents.

Iraq itself has denied any involvement in the murder and accuses Lebanon of violating the 1961 Vienna Convention regarding diplomatic relations.

In the wake of the decision to release the three, diplomats said Lebanon is now considering a renewal of ties with Iraq, notably economic links.

New Iraqi exile group claims attack on Uday

DUBAI (Agencies) — A little known Iraqi opposition group calling itself Al Nahda (renaissance) has claimed responsibility for an assassination attempt last month against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's eldest son.

A senior Iraqi opposition official in London confirmed a report in the Arabic newspaper Al Hayat that four members of the group escaped from Iraq to Europe after the Dec. 12 attack in Baghdad against Uday.

The four assailants were accompanied by Raad Al Hazzaa, a former army officer described as the mastermind of the attack. Al Hayat reported.

The men hid with bedouin tribesmen in western Iraq for four days before making their way to Jordan then the United Arab Emirates, the newspaper reported, quoting an unnamed Iraqi opposition figure in London.

From the United Arab Emirates, they went to Europe, the newspaper said.

Other Iraqi dissidents have named Hazzaa as a key figure in the attack. Al Hayat said he was seeking to avenge President Saddam's execution of his uncle, Gen. Omar Al Hazzaa, in 1986.

The younger Hazzaa used ties to President Saddam's relatives to track Uday's movements, the newspaper said.

The officials told AFP that Al Nahda was behind the assassination bid, and not the Shiite Muslim Al Daawa (Narmiyeh), another opposition group which had claimed responsibility for the attack.

"Al Nahda is a group of young nationalists of various Sunni and Shiite backgrounds, with different political orientations," said the opposition official, who requested anonymity.

Al Nahda had made contact with Iraqi National Congress (the main opposition coalition) in 1994 in Kurdistan, but that it had never joined the group.

Uday was close to death earlier this month after the assassination attempt against him but is now out of danger, sources in Baghdad said Wednesday.

According to the sources, Uday suffered two collapsed lungs. These complications

prompted the Iraqi government's request for French doctors.

A former Iraqi intelligence chief now in exile in Damascus, General Wafiq Samarra, said the attack could be the work of ruling Baath Party dissidents.

Uday accused Iran of orchestrating the attack, but Tehran has denied the allegation.

The Iraqi government has arrested nearly 600 people since an attempt last month on Saddam Hussein's son and their apparent, Mr. Samarra said.

More than 20 high-ranking officers and officials were among those detained in the capital Baghdad and other cities in central Iraq, a traditional stronghold of President Saddam, said Mr. Samarra.

But Mr. Samarra discounted the impact of the arrests on the Iraqi opposition, much of which is abroad.

"The people and the army do not want Saddam, the events prove it and more operations will take place," he said in a statement faxed to the Associated Press in Cairo.

Mr. Samarra said that Uday may be paralysed after the attack has never shown him moving his back or legs.

London's Independent newspaper quoted Iraqi opposition groups as saying Uday was hit by four bullets, one of which is still lodged in his spine.

The Independent said Al Daawa is believed to have been involved in the logistics and organisation of the plot but that Raad Al Hazzaa and some of his relations were the driving force.

The paper said that after the assassination bid, those who took part fled to Iran. The paper said the Iranian government had no prior knowledge of the plot.

On Tuesday, Iraq in a letter to the United Nations Security Council, said Iran had refused to hand over to it suspects in the attack. Iran said the claim it was harbouring those involved in the attack were groundless, according to the Iraqi.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry has denied involvement in the attack. The Iraqi letter did not name any suspects.

Ekeus says Iraq can no longer develop missiles

DUBAI (AFP) — U.N. disarmament chief Rolf Ekeus said he doubts Iraq's ability to develop long-range missiles or nuclear weapons, according to remarks published in the Arab newspaper Al Hayat on Friday.

"We doubt the capacity of Iraq to produce missiles with a range of more than 150 kilometres," said Mr. Ekeus, chairman of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on dismantling Iraq.

"Thanks to the monitoring system put in place in Iraq by UNSCOM, we are convinced that Iraq is not manufacturing long-range missiles," as demanded by U.N. resolutions.

However, he said Iraq could "load its missiles (of less than 150 kilometres) with prohibited warheads."

Under U.N. resolutions adopted after the Gulf war, UNSCOM inspectors must account for and supervise the destruction of all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, including missiles with a range of more than 150 kilometres which could target Iraq's neighbours.

A crippling oil embargo imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait can only be lifted when the arms inspectors have certified that Baghdad has complied with the resolutions.

"Iraq does not have the capacity to act in a manner which represents a danger to the (Gulf) region," Mr. Ekeus said, but added that if Iraq "resumed development of its chemical and biological capabilities, that would be a very dangerous issue."

Mr. Ekeus also said Baghdad "does not possess nuclear weapons and does not have the capacity to produce them."

However, he accused Iraqi leaders of hindering UNSCOM's mission by refusing to clear up outstanding issues concerning mainly the long-range missiles which Baghdad claims it has destroyed.

EU letter assures Palestinians of commitment to achieving just, lasting and comprehensive peace

By Michael Jansen

LITTLE IS known about the European role in the negotiations leading to last week's Hebron protocol which brought about Israel's evacuation of 80 per cent of the West Bank town on Jan. 17.

But Europe's direct involvement in the Hebron deal has prompted the European envoy to the Middle East peace process, Spain's Miguel Moratinos, to try to bring Syria and Israel back to the negotiating table in an endeavour to secure a "comprehensive" regional peace.

Until Sunday, Jan. 12, Israel and the U.S. put up a joint effort to exclude direct European involvement in Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. But as the atmosphere soured and the situation became increasingly desperate, the "strategic partners" took the strategic decision of inviting Europe to provide a "collateral letter of assurances" to the Palestinians to encourage them to compromise on a deadline for Israeli withdrawal from the rural areas of the West Bank.

It was on the same day that King Hussein made his dramatic mission to Gaza to discuss with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat the Aug. 31, 1998, date for the completion of redeployment

rather than the Sept. 4, 1997 deadline fixed in the second Oslo accord of September.

Mr. Arafat agreed after he had been promised a combination of assurances — American, European, Jordanian and Egyptian.

Mr. Moratinos presented the European letter early on Jan. 15, after the Hebron protocol was initiated by the two sides.

But both the U.S. and European letters to the Palestinians were kept secret "for the time being," as one authoritative Palestinian source put it.

Another said that the Palestinians did "not want to undermine (Israeli Premier Benjamin) Netanyahu's position."

While the American letter remains unpublished, the Jordan Times was able to obtain a copy of the European text, which the previous Palestinian source said, "... much stronger than the U.S. letter — taking into account the fact that Europe's position is much better from our point of view."

Following is the text of letter that the European Union presidency provided to Mr. Arafat on the conclusion of the Hebron protocol:

Dear Mr. President,

IN MY capacity as president of the Council of Ministers of the European Union, allow me, first of all,

to congratulate you on the occasion of the signing of the protocol in implementation of Israeli redeployment in Hebron and the connected documents.

As you are aware, the European Union, through its special envoy to the Middle East peace process, has been in close contact with all the parties involved in order to help achieving this important breakthrough. The Hebron negotiations demonstrated that only the parties to the conflict can ultimately resolve their differences.

The European Union is convinced that you have reached a fair and balanced agreement which will favour further progress within the framework established by the Madrid conference and the Oslo agreements.

Please be assured, Mr. President, that the European Union remains committed to the completion of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. It will therefore use all its political and moral weight to ensure that all the provisions in the agreements already reached will be fully implemented on the basis of reciprocity by both Israeli and Palestinian sides in a timely fashion.

Hans Van Mierlo, Dutch Foreign Minister who holds the presidency of

the Council of Ministers at present.

It is the final paragraph which lays down European policy on the peace process, reaffirming Europe's commitment to a "just, lasting and comprehensive peace" in the region and stating Europe's willingness to "use all its political and moral weight to ensure all the provisions in the agreements already reached will be fully implemented."

These two phrases distinguish the European position from that of the U.S. which is prepared to interpret and modify the agreements already reached in order to accommodate Israel.

Thus, the European letter is considered by Palestinians a very strong assertion that Israel must honour its treaty obligations and a pledge to use "political" means to secure compliance.

As Europe is Israel's main market, Europe is in an excellent situation to exert economic pressure to ensure compliance.

The Palestinians could not have asked for more concrete assurances. It is now up to the hesitant and cautious Dutch presidency. In spite of Holland's close ties with the U.S. and its traditional friendship with the Jewish state, to meet the commitment made in the letter.

COLUMN 8

Brazilian offers \$500 reward for lost chicken

BRASILIA (R) — A Brazilian woman is offering a \$500 reward for information leading to the return of her lost pet Scratchy, a chicken that drinks milk and sleeps in a bed, the Globo newspaper reported. It said Irene Azevedo, 41, of Belo Horizonte, was distraught and unable to sleep after Scratchy disappeared. "She could be in somebody's pot by now," the newspaper quoted Azevedo as saying. "But she's not just a chicken. She's a loving companion, a jewel." She has hired a private detective and placed advertisements in local newspapers offering a \$500 reward. Azevedo said she would easily recognise her chicken. Scratchy drinks a saucer of milk every night before retiring to a special cot.

Man takes joy-ride in Siberian train

MOSCOW (R) — Russian police are looking for a man who took a locomotive for a joy-ride on a major Siberian railway. Interfax news agency reported. It said an unidentified person had introduced himself as a train driver to a duty officer on Wednesday at Tynda station on the Baikal-Amur line that runs from lake Baikal to Russia's far east. He then drove the locomotive away. It was found abandoned late at night not far from the station, but there are no clues to the identity of the driver.

Burglar caught by footprints in snow

SARATOGA SPRINGS (R) — An ex-convict who allegedly stole office equipment not only left a trail of footprints in the snow but walked into a restaurant filled with police officers, authorities said. Saratoga Springs police officer Gregory Santos discovered the burglary at an insurance company office on Sunday night, tracked the footprints into the woods behind the building and found a coat, hat and tape recorders lying in the snow. The trail took him to the door of a restaurant where hundreds of local and state police officers were attending a retirement party for a New York State police sergeant. "He tracked him down like a Moundie," police spokesman Robert Flanagan said. "When Santos came into the party he asked whether anyone had come in without a coat and about 12 officers pointed to a man using a pay phone."

"Santos tapped him on the shoulder and arrested him." The suspect, Jude Clairmont, was being held without bail on third degree burglary charges.

Our brains as big as they'll get, scientists say

LONDON (R) — Science-fiction films that depict our descendants as big-brained geniuses are off the mark, British scientists said. They say our brains are as big as they can be. Chris Winter and fellow researchers at British Telecommunications PLC's BT laboratories say the brain has just about reached top capacity. At best, it is within 20 per cent of the maximum, they told New Scientist magazine. The human brain — and those of other higher mammals — packs a lot of power into a small area because of the convoluted way it folds up inside the skull. Human brains are about three times the size of that of our nearest relative — the chimpanzee. Dolphins and whales have brains of comparable size to ours. Scientists say the human skull could not grow any bigger because, as any mother can attest, it is already almost too big to go through the birth canal. This is one reason human babies are born so early and helpless — any later and their heads would be too big.

EU envoy me

MOGADISHU (R) — Mohammed held talks with EU envoy on Saturday. The EU envoy, Sir David Hannay, is working to bring humanitarian aid to the city. Sir David is also working to bring humanitarian aid to the city. Sir David is also working to bring humanitarian aid to the city.

Volume 22

Egypt, Libya foreign ministers hold OAU talks

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa and Libyan Foreign Minister Muammar al-Qaddafi held talks on Saturday. The talks were held in Tripoli. The talks were held in Tripoli. The talks were held in Tripoli.

Man takes joy-ride in Siberian train

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Woman saves the day in speeding British bus

LONDON (AFP) — A woman saved a young boy from being crushed by a speeding British bus. The boy was on the ground when the bus was speeding. The boy was on the ground when the bus was speeding. The boy was on the ground when the bus was speeding.